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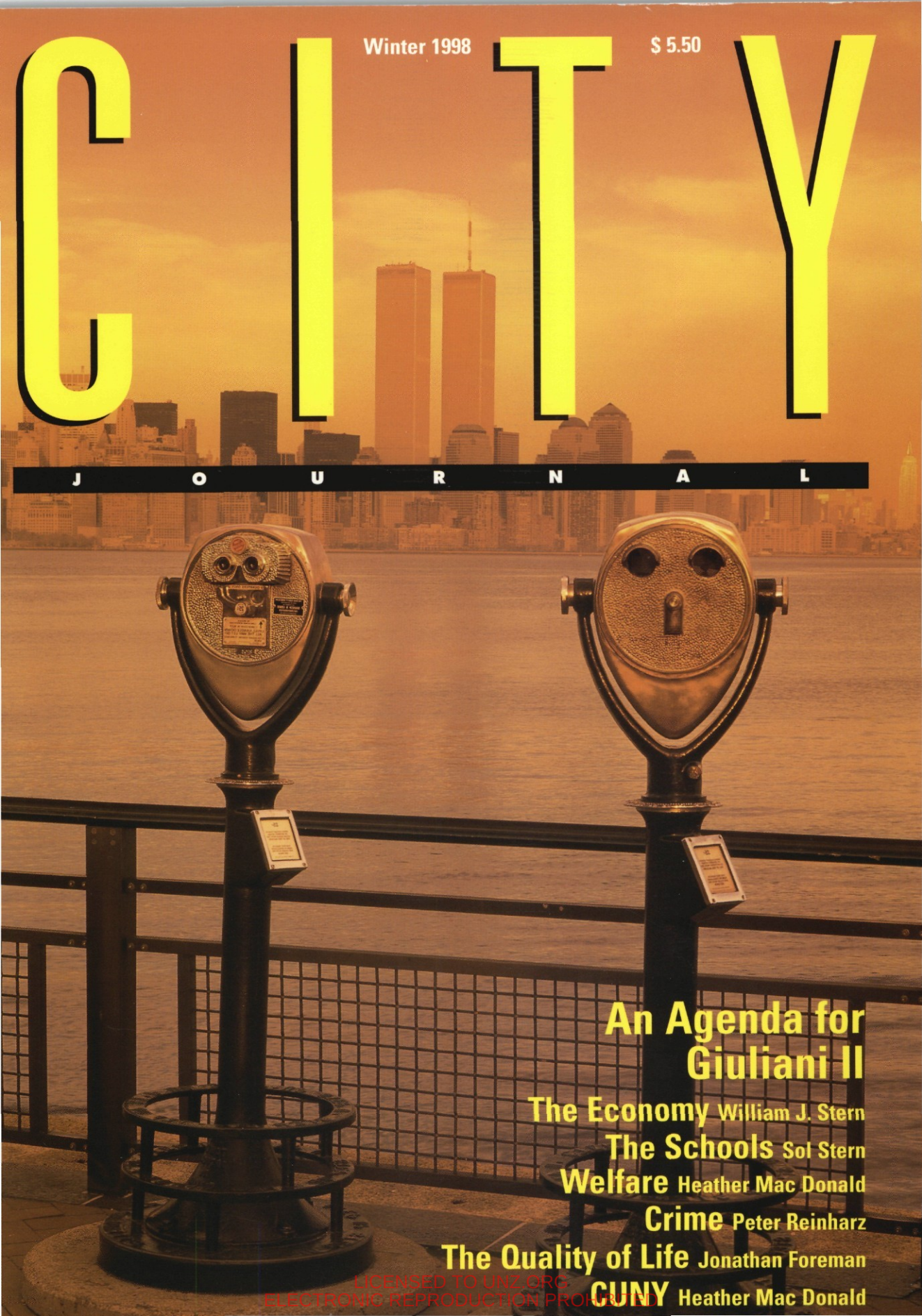

An Agenda for Giuliani II

The Economy William J. Stern
The Schools Sol Stern
Welfare Heather Mac Donald
Crime Peter Reinharz
The Quality of Life Jonathan Foreman
CUNY Heather Mac Donald

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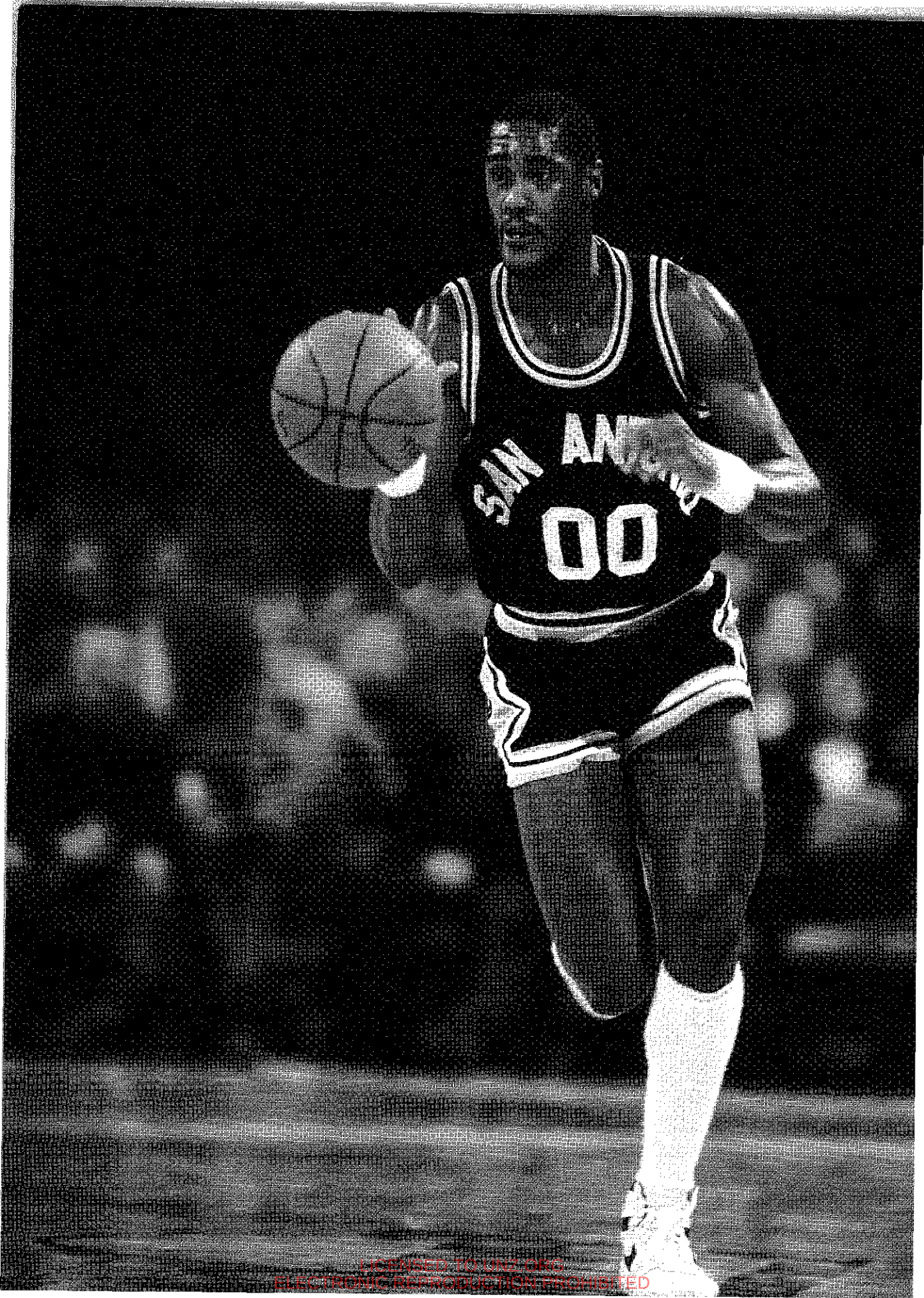

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"I was thinking, 'If I can just get to the game, I'll be all right.'"

JOHNNY MOORE

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

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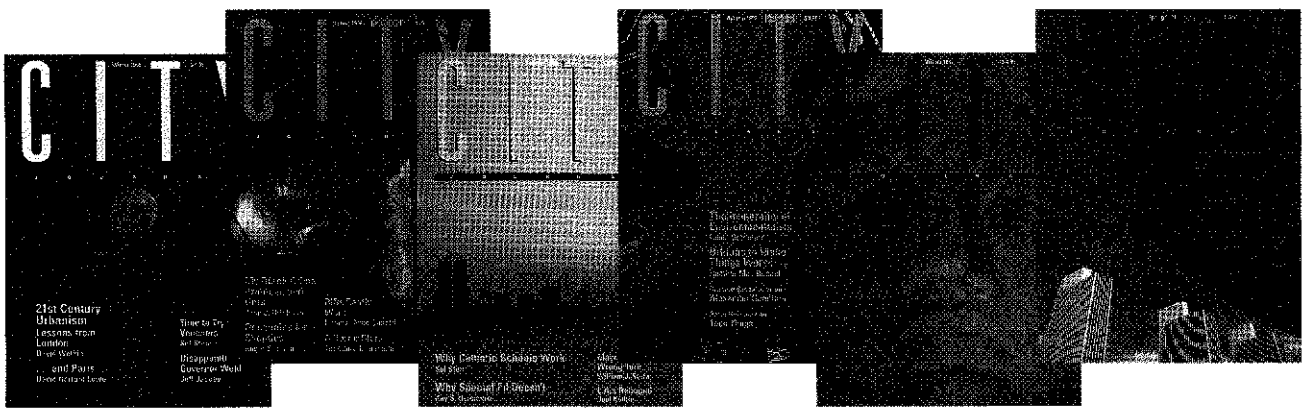

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In Prospect

So far, Rudy Giuliani has proved New York's best mayor since Fiorello La Guardia; the question as he begins his second term is: will he equal La Guardia's unmatched standard?

It's not a fanciful idea. When he took office, New York seemed in an inexorable decline, facing five apparently insoluble problems. But he has solved two and a half of them in four years—and he has four years to go.

From the start, he rightly saw that the most urgent issue was crime. The first duty of any government is making sure that citizens are safe, and New York's soaring crime rate made New Yorkers feel that the social order was unraveling as their government dithered. In one mayoral term, Giuliani has beat back crime almost to 1950s' levels—the biggest urban governance success in recent memory, accomplished almost overnight.

He achieved that success in large part by solving the second problem: upgrading the city's then-ragged quality of life. New Yorkers hunched their shoulders in apprehension not just of muggers but of crazed, aggressive beggars; potholed, garbage-strewn streets; graffiti and boom boxes; open-air drug markets; and hookers pandering to every squalid taste. Instead of the life-affirming panorama of metropolitan life, they too often saw a theater of depravity and degradation. When the mayor re-established that public spaces belonged to the law-abiding rather than to the lawless and dysfunctional, he gave wrongdoers and ordinary citizens the message that somebody *was* in charge, that there *was* a social order and a standard of behavior. Wrongdoers understood that their days of impunity were over; citizens grasped that their city had a future. Lastly, in a city in which 1 million residents collected some form of public assistance, the mayor has managed to reduce the welfare rolls by 335,000—a good start.

In this issue, *City Journal* lays out what we think the mayor needs to do to complete the job of rescuing New York. Above all, he must get the city's economy growing again, as William J. Stern explains on page 15. Otherwise, no matter what successes the mayor achieves, the city still faces a future of decline. The second major task is fixing the public schools—the last great civil rights challenge, as Sol Stern argues on page 26. As for welfare, Heather Mac Donald writes (on page 35) that workfare leaves untouched the key welfare problem: illegitimacy, which ensures an unending supply of new recruits to the welfare rolls and to the underclass. Solving these problems won't be easy: not only will the mayor need approval from New York State's benighted legislature, but also the interests he must defeat are powerful. And because the term-limits law means that Giuliani can't run again, in a year or two he will find his power beginning to ebb.

These tasks are hard to accomplish, too, because they run counter to the political culture of New York (and, in the case of illegitimacy, the national culture). Yet one of the great revelations of the first Giuliani term was the power of a strong leader to change the culture. So much of what's gone wrong in urban society over the last generation has been the result of cultural change: of the 1960s' beliefs that criminals are victims of social conditions, that welfare recipients are victims of economic injustice and racism, that quality-of-life crimes are "victimless," that single-parenthood is merely a "lifestyle" choice and single-parent families work fine. Because these beliefs originated with the elites, it seemed logical that if they ever were to change, the changes would begin with the elites, too.

In fact, the last places on earth that will cling to the old assumptions will be the universities and the media. But Mayor Giuliani's successful policies actually have begun to precipitate a cultural change. New Yorkers found that they loved the results—enough to reelect Giuliani by a landslide and even to begin admitting to themselves and one another what they only vaguely felt four years ago: that it's nice to live in an orderly and lawful city, that criminals are not victims and ought to be held accountable for their actions. Which means that the mayor has the power to change Gotham's thinking—perhaps enough to finish the job of saving New York. ●

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Soundings

Waste Not

Nothing is less glamorous than wastewater treatment, though it's an essential responsibility of municipal government. But when Indianapolis, where I've been mayor since 1992, decided to privatize its wastewater treatment plants, the savings were glitzy indeed.

Indianapolis operates two plants that filter impurities from the city's sewage and release clean water into the White River. When we first considered putting the plants up for competitive bids in 1992, industry experts said that there were few better-run plants in the country—a claim buttressed by the bundles of national awards that our employees had won in competitions with other city governments.

Our first step was to see how much better our plants could do. We hired a Big Six accounting firm to assess potential savings from private management. At best, the firm concluded, we could reduce operating costs by a slim 5 percent through efficiency measures. Still, we wanted to subject every possible government service to the rigors of private sector competition, and our wastewater plants would be no exception. Setting the report aside, we decided to test the market.

The winning proposal—one of many from across the globe—came from a consortium formed expressly to compete for the management of the plants. The consortium promised to reduce our operating costs by an eye-catching 44 percent, or $65 million, over the five-year contract. Moreover, the consortium's partners—they include a French firm—possess enormous financial assets that allow them to guarantee these savings. Thus, the city slashes its costs whether management produces the proposed efficiencies at the plants or not. To date, cost reductions are substantially ahead of schedule, a result of the consortium's market-tested management, superior technology, more experienced engineers—who grasp problems more quickly than did their city counterparts—and superb preventive maintenance.

Of course, savings are not the only story. On average, the water that leaves the plants is far cleaner than required by the EPA's stringent standards, and workers have benefited, with consortium employees' annual raises and bonuses averaging 4.1 percent, compared with the 2.1 percent guaranteed to city union employees. Union grievances plummeted from the previous average of 38 per year under city management to zero in 1995. The more efficient plants are also safer: the accident rate fell 80 percent after privatization.

As New Yorkers consider whether private wastewater treatment is a good idea for their city, our experience offers a lesson: had we simply accepted that we ran our plants better than most government facilities, had we allowed "good enough for government work" to be our standard, we would have lost millions of dollars in savings and substantial technical improvements. By reaching out to a worldwide market of providers, we gained access to the best managers and most advanced technology on earth, yielding cleaner water at almost half the previous price.

— Stephen Goldsmith

Counting by Race

Announcing the new categories for the 2000 census in November, Office of Management and Budget Director Franklin Raines stressed that the federal government wants individuals to decide for themselves which race they belong to—as long as they don't decide "multiracial." After all, if Americans could reject fixed racial identification, that would be a big step toward a less race-obsessed society. So instead of finding a multiracial category on the form, beginning in the next census, people with mixed ancestry can check off as many individual races as they want—though they won't be able to check "other" for race any longer, as 9.8 million did in the 1990 census. OMB's new census categories strike a blow against the idea that America is one community. Congress should overturn them and insist on a multiracial category.

Despite the census, America becomes more of a single community every day. Racial intermarriage continues to rise. If

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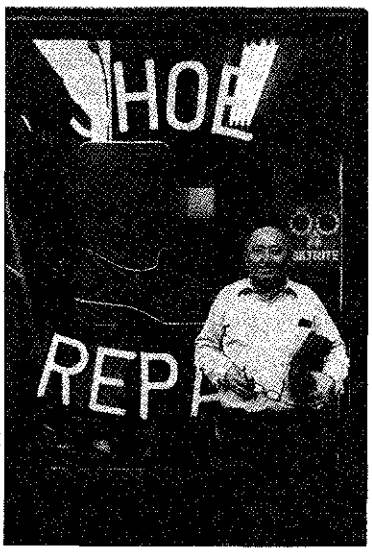
current rates hold steady, by the middle of the next century many millions of Americans will have mixed racial heritage. And many will refuse to consider themselves members of racial minorities. Already, according to a withheld 1997 Census Bureau survey, when asked whether they are Hispanic or black, most Cuban-Americans and many Puerto Rican and Mexican-Americans answer "white." Of course, if Americans start shedding racial identification, many entrenched public programs will dwindle. In addition—no small gain—the shift in Americans' self-understanding would help undermine the entire affirmative-action industry.

Because the census is so arcane, motivated racial activists have a nearly free field. Few in the media pay attention, and even fewer citizens. For example, how many know that activists prevented federal agencies from using the 1990 census data to allocate various entitlements, successfully prodding them to rely instead on a "modified age/race profile"? This modified profile divvies up the 9.8 million "others" of the 1990 census among established racial categories. If the census included a more attractive term than "other"—which insinuates outsider status—even more Americans would take advantage of it for the 2000 census. "Multiracial" is one possibility; I prefer "all-American."

A clever maneuver derailed the multiracial category for Census 2000. Mixed-ancestry Americans now can check off many races on the new forms: black, native Hawaiian, Asian, and so on. However, census bureaucrats have already stated that they will not count these Americans as multiracial in the official numbers but will classify them as blacks or Hispanics whenever possible. The likely result: the federal government maintains



HARVEY WANG (3)

or increases minority set-asides, entitlements, and quotas.

Census categories affect elections, too. The Voting Rights Act prohibits redrawing congressional districts if this dilutes minority representation. By insisting that those who mark multiple categories are "minorities," racial activists can prevent redistricting where it is otherwise acceptable. A White House representative already informed a congressional committee last July that the government will treat those partially black—even those who might have only one black ancestor—as if they were fully black for redistricting purposes. Thus, the White House returns us blindly to a darker period of American history, when southern whites decided who was white and who was black, and "one drop of black blood" was definitive.

Census officials hide behind a technicality. If we add a multiracial category, they complain, we can't compare the 2000 numbers with earlier census numbers. Baloney. The census plans to drop the "other" category, and it makes changes all the time, sometimes with good reason. Well-established statistical procedures exist to make comparisons even when the census uses different categories.

If the census allowed Americans to leave racial identity behind, is it unrealistic to imagine that many other institutions—colleges, businesses, courtrooms—might follow? If Congress overturns OMB's bad decision, perhaps we can hope for a less race-conscious census entering the next millennium.

— Amitai Etzioni

Slouching Towards Cloning

The rights revolution that previously brought you homeless people sleeping on sidewalks and the mentally ill babbling on street corners appears poised to triumph with yet another con-

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stitutionally protected right: the right to have ourselves cloned.

Last February, after Dolly the lamb—the world's first successfully cloned animal—grabbed headlines, many scientists and ethicists raised moral and practical doubts about the cloning of human beings. Responding to this uncertain, even apprehensive, mood, President Clinton banned government funding for human cloning. But in our high-tech age, ten months is plenty of time for a "paradigm shift," to borrow the language of Al Gore's favorite thinker, Thomas Kuhn. And according to a December *New York Times* article, we have witnessed "an enormous change in attitudes in just a few months." The government has begun to support research on cloning monkeys, and once squeamish scientists are now asking: "Why not?"

We should have seen this coming. From the outset, researchers neutralized talk of mad scientists toiling in Frankenstein's laboratory with a dose of good humor. Scientists named Dolly—cloned from her parent's mammary gland—after mega-mammaried Dolly Parton; they called the first calf cloned from an embryo . . . well, Gene. The media added to the laughs with headlines like HELLO DOLLY and CLONE ON THE RANGE!

Today, supporters cast human cloning as just another in a diverse but familiar series of technologically advanced reproductive rights, including in-vitro fertilization, surrogacy, and embryo implantation. Gone are the science-fiction scenarios of reborn billionaires, megalomaniacs and sextuplet Hitlers. Instead, the *Times* relates heart rending tales of parents who want to reproduce their terminally ill child, women who suffer from infertility, and a husband and wife who *both* suffer from infertility. Not that we necessarily need the strings softly playing: as the *Times* article breezily reminds us, "it is an American tradition to allow people to reproduce in any way they like."

The shallowness of the discussion may be inevitable, since it is dominated by lawyers and doctors—the very folks with the most to gain from the new rights and new technology. As we know from hard experience, the law tends to squeeze a moral problem dry of all but its constitutional rind. The sole question then becomes: "Can we constitutionally prohibit cloning?" Dr. Steen Willadsen, the Danish pioneer of cloning techniques (he now works in New Jersey), put it best when he observed, "America is not ruled by ethics. It is ruled by law."

Further promoting this merely pragmatic approach to human cloning, gay activists see in the new technology an answer to the conundrum of homosexual reproduction. Harvard law professor Laurence H. Tribe, in a *Times* op-ed published shortly after the paper's December cloning article, predictably argued that to oppose cloning might be to surrender to oppressive notions of what is, as he would no doubt scare-quote it, "natural." And Tribe ingenuously introduced yet another minority so aggrieved that nobody yet knows it exists: stigmatized children, products of an inevitable black market in human clones.

As for the scientific community, their pragmatic question—is it doable?—also creeps closer to a thumbs-up answer. Discoveries laying groundwork for human cloning are coming so quickly that everyone seems to have forgotten the freak calves, failed clones weighing a massive 150 pounds each, born at a Texas company in 1992. They—or something more frightening—may come back to haunt us yet.

— Kay S. Hymowitz

A Winning Gambit

American educators, in love with new fads and theories, fill our schools with ill-conceived panaceas—from the "new math" to whole language to Internet surfing—meant to reverse three decades of academic decline. But one new school fashion that really works is a game that goes back 13 centuries—chess. Educators who scorn back-to-basics programs that stress homework and study look kindly upon chess—it's only a game, after all. The result: in some schools, weekly chess classes and competitive chess teams have prompted students—many of them low-income kids—to learn as never before.

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What does chess offer to schoolchildren? Says Garry Kasparov, reigning world champion: "Chess is great for memory, for self-discipline, and for determination. Children also learn responsibility, which is missing from the schools. In chess, you are on your own and there is nobody to blame." In addition, Kasparov notes, having a cohort of chess-playing kids "improves the educational environment."

Harlem's Mott Intermediate School proves Kasparov's point. Though three-quarters of the students body are poor enough to qualify for the federal free-lunch program, the nearly all Hispanic and black school uses the ancient game as a critical part of the curriculum. The school ranks first in Harlem in reading scores and has won two national chess championships.

Observes Maurice Ashley, the highest-ranking black chess player in the world and director of several school chess programs: "Chess begs for individual style and creativity, not the regurgitation of information. Purpose in thought and logical reasoning come to work together." And Ashley thinks chess can make a difference for many disadvantaged kids: "My best players are those who don't do well in school. Once they become involved, they tend to flower at chess and learn more and become more motivated." Moreover, says Ashley, "Involvement in the game brings out a passion for the study of the game, and the passion for study translates itself into your everyday life."

Recent research supports Ashley's observations. A 1996 study by education psychologist Stuart Margulies discovered that chess improved reading and reasoning skills. A 1997 Columbia Teachers College study found, too, that chess influences students far beyond the squares on the board. Students learned more and read more in their efforts to master the game. And teachers can use chess analogies to explain problems in other subjects.

Chess succeeds in getting disadvantaged kids to learn by simple, time-tested means: it challenges children, raises expectations, and isn't afraid of a little competition. Though American society—and most of its education establishment—preaches self-esteem only to create ever more victims, chess does something much better: it encourages children to control their destiny and work hard to make every choice count. —*Matt Robinson*

Pro Bono?

The Legal Aid Society, over much of its 120-year history, gained a distinguished reputation for representing indigent clients. But in recent years the organization has strayed from its core brief and has become a dogged—and effective—commando force for the expansion of the welfare state.

In so doing, Legal Aid diverts resources from the defense of impoverished suspects to a politicized struggle, through class-action lawsuits, for greater entitlements for broad groups of non-defendants: inmates, homeless folks, and public-aid recipients. And what is beginning to irk at least some members of the city's legal establishment is that the society's class-action machine is bankrolled by the city's richest law firms, which make annual tax-deductible contributions that can top $100,000 each, while the rest of us pick up the final tab in the form of increased taxes.

Legal Aid has argued for an increase in the basic welfare grant; succeeded in forcing the city to provide housing on demand, without proof of need; and fought against the workfare requirements of last year's federal welfare-reform law. Today, Legal Aid is stalling a sorely needed provision of the modest rent-control reform that requires tenants to pay rent into an escrow account while pursuing complaints against their land-

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lords. Recently, too, the society took the side of two welfare recipients who wanted to skip mandatory electronic fingerprinting because of a bizarre professed belief that it would "put the mark of the devil" on them.

At last, one big-time lawyer, Francis Menton Jr.—a partner at prosperous and prestigious Wilkie, Farr & Gallagher—has begun agitating for an end to his colleagues' misguided generosity. Speaking to an audience of leading lawyers in December, Menton (who once enthusiastically supported Legal Aid) said that funding Legal Aid's class actions "makes it so that you well-connected millionaires can trump democracy and force the working class to pay for your favorite charities." Most partners in the big firms probably don't sympathize with Legal Aid's politics, though: the firms give because they have always given, since the days before Legal Aid became radicalized, and because by giving they get bragging rights about the size of their *pro bono* contribution.

Gadflies like Menton won't find it easy to defund Legal Aid's class actions. But by attacking the organization's efforts in this area, he may begin to embarrass the society enough so that it returns to its noble criminal-defense roots. —*E. V. Kontorovich*

I Take Me

Okay, so it's one thing to leave your fiancée at the altar. And if you must slink off to enjoy your Tahitian honeymoon solo, that's understandable, too. After all, leaving your fiancée at the altar must be an incredibly stressful experience. But once you've settled in on the beach, and as long as you're using your cellular phone anyway, why not give your fiancée a ring to apologize, to let her know what happened? At least hang your head a little.

When Tasos Michael ditched 27-year-old Manhattan kindergarten teacher Nicole Contos moments before their $125,000 November wedding was set to begin, the breach of etiquette shocked everybody. The jilted bride-to-be was still trusting, though, announcing to reporters: "Whether I go back to him or not is a personal decision," and sighing: "I hope he calls." As for Mr. Michael, when reporters finally tracked him down in Tahiti, he told them, snickering: "*She* can contact *me*." Now this was a man firm in his resolve not to get hitched. Even the *New York Times* found itself slightly appalled by his brazenness, and devoted a lead editorial to the question: wherever could such a man come from, that he wouldn't even *call*?

But if you have been keeping up with the times, you would know that Tasos Michael is the sort of man we should be celebrating, not deploring.

Take the 92nd Street Y, for instance, whose advertising slogan is: "Commit to yourself now." Or consider the new-age spa whose billboard instructs you to "Put energy into yourself. Remember, you can't depend on anyone but yourself." And the sign inside? "*Unplugging*: unplugging means getting rid of people you don't like, people who have become a burden to you in your life—in other words, *toxic* people."

And remember the elite's outcry when the Louisiana Legislature passed its "covenant marriage" law last August? This law made it possible for people to enter into indissoluble marriage (or at least more indissoluble than today's norm). Not mandatory; the law simply offered a choice. But to some, even allowing the *choice* to commit permanently to someone else gives offense.

Katha Pollitt, who opines that "divorce is an American value," wrote in the *Times* that covenant marriages would encourage "a miserable two-parent home, with lots of fighting and shouting and frozen silences and tears." Peter Kamer then added, in another *Times* op-ed, that "what is insidious about Louisiana's covenant marriage is that, contrary to claims on its behalf, it is out of touch with our traditional values: self-expression, self-fulfillment, self-reliance. The Louisiana law invites couples to lash themselves to a morality the broader culture does not support, an arrangement that creates a potential for terrible tensions."

Clearly, we've misunderstood poor Tasos Michael. By choos-

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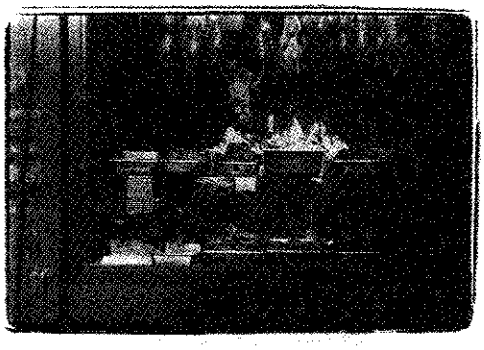
ing not to "lash" himself to a kindergarten teacher, he was just practicing our "traditional values: self-expression, self-fulfillment, self-reliance." With any luck, the kindergarten teacher will learn her lesson and resolve never to love anyone other than herself. Were she a regular reader of *New Woman*, of course, she would already know this. There, Harriet Lerner offered the following helpful advice to women who persist, despite everything, in seeking "to practice unconditional love": "I suggest getting a cat."

Twenty years from now, when the men are all in Tahiti and the women have all married cats, the *New York Times* will doubtless still be alternating between editorials celebrating divorce as "an American value" and those wondering how he could not even call.

— *Wendy Shalit*

Candy from Babies

The New York Public Interest Research Group, one of 23 state-advocacy organizations operating under the umbrella of the Ralph Nader–inspired United States Public Interest Group, receives nearly $600,000 of its $3 million annual budget from CUNY student fees. In the mid-seventies, when "Nader's Raiders" were all the rage, NYPIRG lobbied each CUNY campus for access to student fees and successfully entrenched itself through student referenda, later approved by CUNY's Board of Trustees. It has pushed its left-wing agenda with campus help ever since. NYPIRG's singular arrangement with CUNY continues automatically from year to year unless students work up the motivation to end it, no easy task against a well-funded professional advocacy group not shy to play dirty when it has to. (In 1993, critics blasted NYPIRG's College of Staten Island division for compiling an "enemies list," detailing the political affiliations and sexual histories of campus opponents.)



Take a look at a few of NYPIRG's pet projects: a voter registration drive in homeless shelters and soup kitchens, a center that provides advice to tenants on how to use small-claims courts to sue landlords, and innumerable "environmental justice" initiatives—from campaigns against lead paint to the struggle for zero-emission vehicles—all aimed at weaving a thick net of regulations to entangle ravenous capitalists. Perhaps we should be thankful that the group lavishes over half of its budget on salaries and other perks for its employees.

NYPIRG's supporters say that the fees are voluntary, noting that any individual student can apply for a refund. But as a top CUNY administrator (who preferred anonymity) admits, CUNY rigs the game in NYPIRG's favor. Many students don't know that the refunds are available or even that the fees wind up in NYPIRG's coffers. Students who do seek refunds must approach NYPIRG's offices directly, where motivated activists might challenge their requests. Moreover, NYPIRG can bank the fees it obtains, generating interest, even if it must return a portion later. Just picture the outcry if a pro-life or deregulation advocacy group received university-levied student fees in this fashion.

CUNY should end all student fees for advocacy and force NYPIRG to rely on truly voluntary contributions to bankroll its sixties'-vintage politics. A legal challenge probably won't work; the Supreme Court upheld NYPIRG's similar arrangement with SUNY in 1992 on First Amendment grounds. And the student union, with its miniscule voter turnout, is not representative of student interests and isn't likely to pull the plug. The best bet for reform is for the mayor to pressure CUNY's Board of Trustees to stop favoring NYPIRG.

— *Brian C. Anderson*

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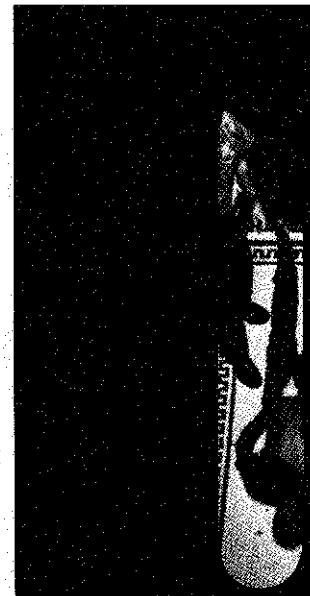
An Agenda for Civil



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THE ECONOMY
THE SCHOOLS
WELFARE
CRIME
THE QUALITY OF LIFE
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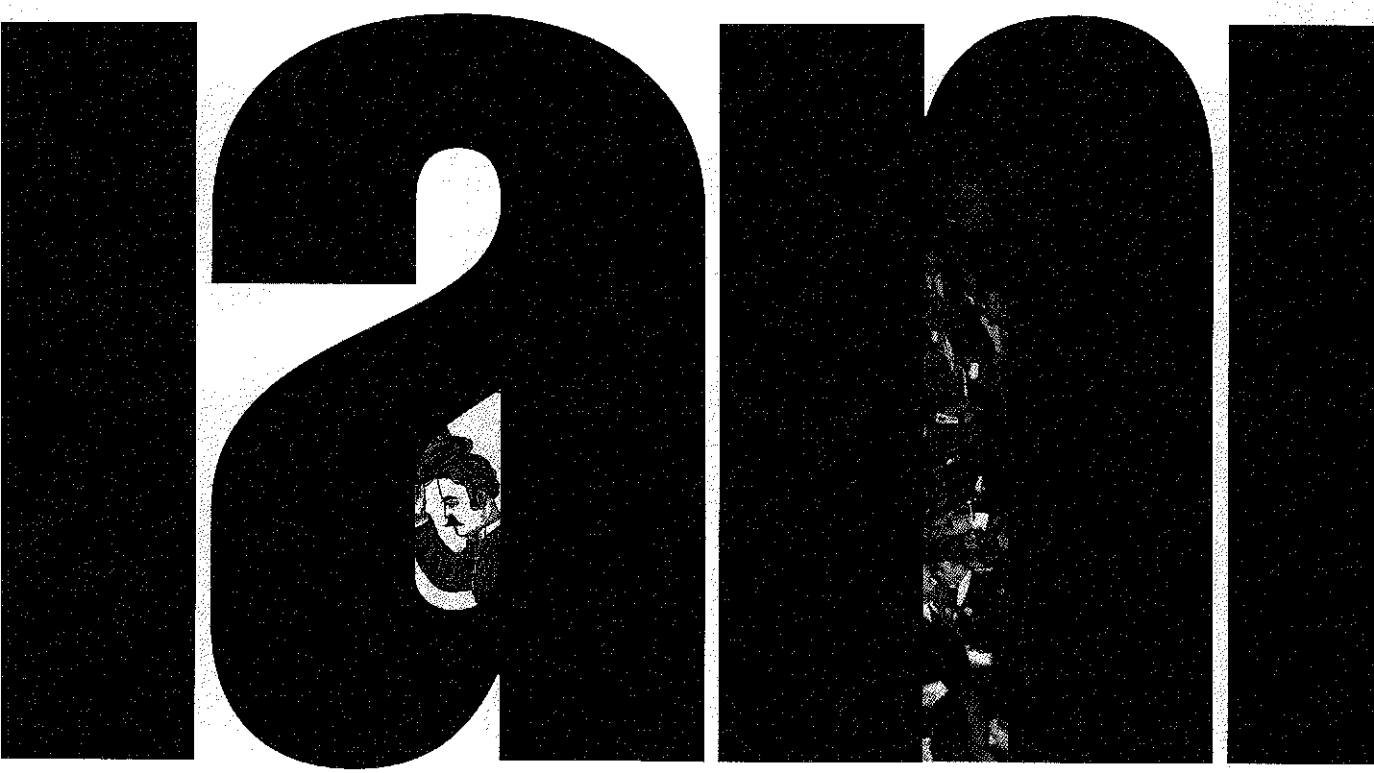

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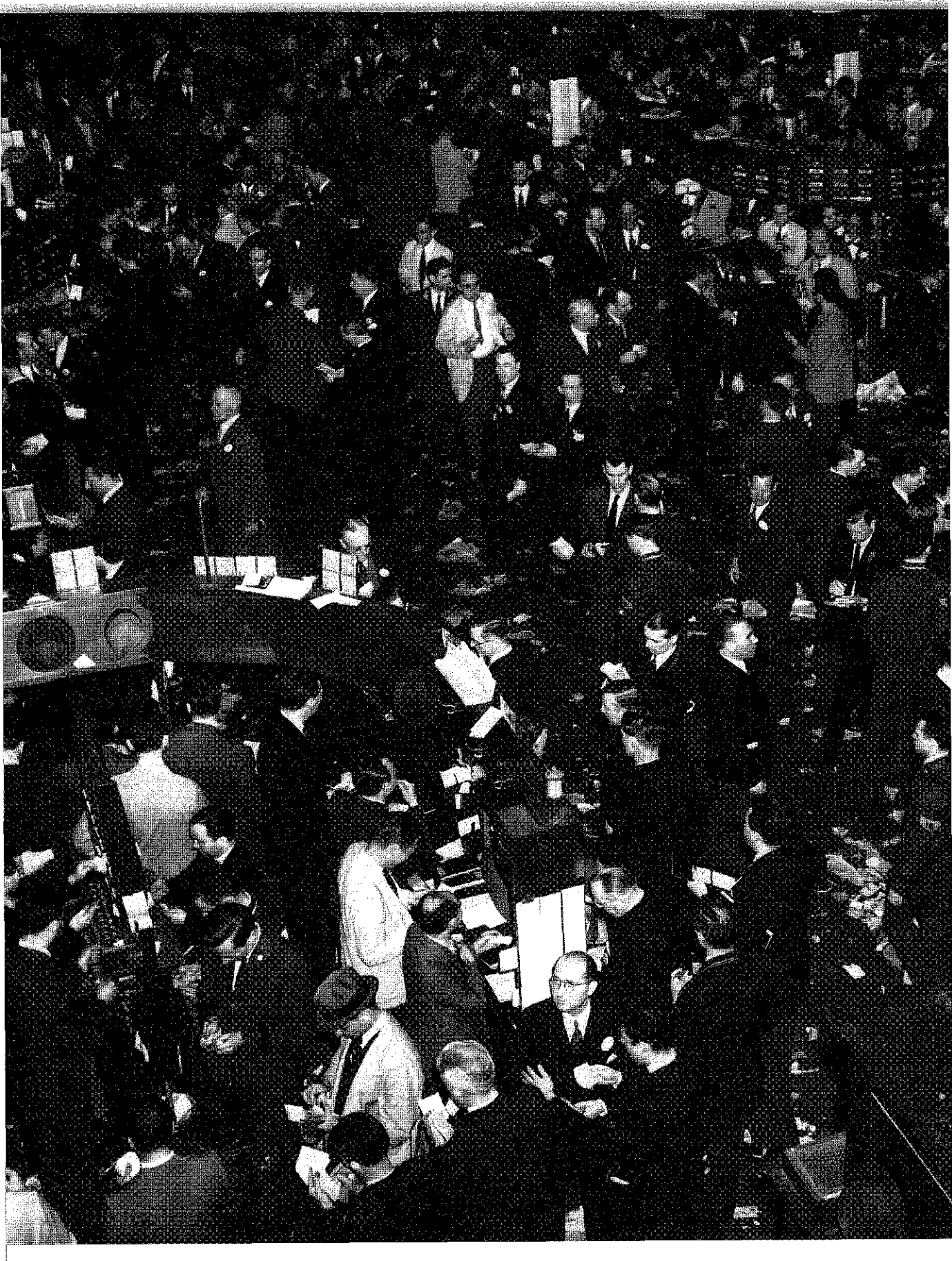

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CORBIS

Restoring the Opportunity City

William J. Stern

The biggest problem facing New York as Mayor Giuliani begins his second term is the economy, which, despite the present temporary uptick fueled by the Wall Street boom, is stagnant and has been stagnant for years. The mayor has two choices. He can continue the policy of managed decline that the city has pursued for decades. Doubtless he will manage it more deftly and intelligently than his predecessors and slow the rate of decline, but the city's long-term outlook will remain gloomy. Or he can take a much more radical approach: he can try to turn the city's fortunes around and make economic growth, rather than a slower rate of economic decline, a public policy imperative. This is by far the preferable course.

It's a course that would break with 50 years of tradition: no New York mayor has made growth a major policy objective since before World War II, and indeed most recent mayors have paid little attention to the city's economy, assuming that, like the weather, it would take care of itself. Consequently, the mayor's first task will be educational. He will have to persuade New Yorkers of the vital importance of a healthy, expansive economy, which the city's political culture has long devalued.

Yet this will not be a hard case to make. In the rest of the nation—and, indeed, around the globe—economic growth has been the dominant political idea for a generation, and the widespread prosperity it has brought is a conspicuous, invincible argument in its favor. Perhaps more important, for generations growth was the animating spirit of New York, too. It is only relatively recently that the city turned its focus to the redistribution, rather than the creation, of wealth. Traditionally, Gotham saw itself primarily as a theater of ambition, a bustling national marketplace and workshop, where talented, energetic people from all over the nation and the world come together to seek opportunity, to exchange ideas, to innovate, to prosper—whether as plutocrats or pastry chefs, bankers or bookkeepers. As

New York faces a stark choice: restart economic growth or continue Gotham's gradual, decades-long managed decline.

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Milwaukee mayor John Norquist likes to point out, that's what cities have always been, from Constantinople and Rome to London and Paris: not breeding grounds of problems or objects of national sympathy but places of hope, opportunity, and achievement.

Mayor Giuliani can point to benefits that growth once showered upon the New Yorker in the street. In the decade from 1900 to 1910, for instance, as the city's population exploded 40 percent, to 4.8 million people, jobs grew at an even more sizzling rate—50 percent—so that 94 percent of male New Yorkers between the ages of 15 and 70 were employed. The majority of these jobs paid low wages, as political scientist Andrew Hacker has described, but workers, many of them immigrants, were nevertheless moving steadily up into the city's middle class. During those years, New Yorkers receiving salaries, instead of more demotic wages, grew from 10 percent of the workforce to 15 percent, and 12 percent of Gotham's families had a maid.

Skip to the twenties. In New York, they roared louder than anywhere. The city's population was still skyrocketing, as 350 new residents arrived daily. What they found was a building boom: a new building sprang out of the ground every working hour—literally, according to the 1920 *Valentine's Manual*—and the assessed value of the city's real estate rose 12.5 percent a year between 1920 and 1925, to $6.7 billion. The local economy was diversified, with 321 occupations listed in the 1920 census. All but five of those occupations included at least one black New Yorker, an indication of the breadth of opportunity. Average income thundered up 43 percent from 1921 to 1927, while at the same time commodity costs fell, so that living standards rose even more strongly. And 96 of the nation's 207 millionaires called Gotham home in 1925.

Growth and prosperity overflowed into the outer boroughs and the entire region. Manhattan's population, 2.3 million in 1920 (or 53 percent greater than its 1990 population), fell 17 percent by 1927, as prospering New Yorkers continued the exodus that had begun at the start of the century out of the Manhattan slums to the many neighborhoods of promise in Brooklyn and the Bronx. In the metropolitan region, with a population totaling 9 million in 1927, prosperity streamed out of 60,000 factories, 868 piers, 13 separate railroads.

Half a century ago, with the depression and the war safely weathered, New York was at the apogee of its prosperity. In 1950 the city's employment reached an all-time peak of 3.3 million. Manufacturing jobs totaled a little over 900,000, and, as former *City Journal* editor Roger Starr observes in *The Rise and Fall of New York City*, New York added more value to manufactured products than any other American city, including Detroit—Cartown, U.S.A. Fully 140 of the Fortune 500 companies had their headquarters in the city, and some 90 percent of the nation's financial services jobs were in New York, too. The city's employment portfolio was almost perfectly diversified among manufacturing, financial services, corporate headquarters, science, engineering, and port jobs, and New York was a major tourist destination for the rest of the country and the world.

Its infrastructure was everything that business needed. To the harbor that nature provided and the railways and subways that private interests had built in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Robert Moses had added an extraordinary system of highways and bridges that was nearly complete by 1950. An unsurpassed educational system, from primary schools to universities, provided immense numbers of highly qualified workers for the manufacturing and service industries. Indeed, the plenitude of qualified workers, from clerks to diamond cutters to mathematicians, served as a magnet that attracted businesses of all kinds to the city.

Fast-forward to the present. Today the city's economy has changed radically, and not for the better. Only 31 of the Fortune 500 companies remain in town. Population stands slightly below where it stood in 1950. Between 1985 and 1995, almost twice as many people left the city as arrived from other parts of the United States. Those who

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left tended to be the affluent elderly and the educated young, entering their most economically productive years. New York is now the nation's leading exporter of native-born talent—the reverse of the situation in 1950, when 80 percent of the immigrants into the city came from other parts of the United States and the outflow of New Yorkers was so small that a contemporary reporter commented: "Nobody leaves New York." Of course, the 1990s out-migration of rich and educated New Yorkers undermines the tax base and the incentive for companies to stay or start here.

Worse still, as the city entered 1997, private-sector employment stood 100,000 jobs below its 1950 peak, and total employment (including government jobs) is today 40,000 jobs below its 1970 peak, despite the strong private-sector job gains of the last few months. Putting those employment numbers in context shows something more troubling than mere stagnation. For while New York's employment went nowhere, employment in the nation as a whole more than doubled, so compared with the rest of the U.S., New York lost ground markedly. Or to put it more temperately, as Steven G. Craig and D. Andrew Austin showed in the last issue of *City Journal*, if the city were the same job-generating dynamo for its region as other big cities of the East and Midwest are for their regions, New York City would have 750,000 more jobs than it actually has today. If Gotham were still the overachieving regional job dynamo that it was in 1962, it would have 1 million more jobs than it now has—rather than having the dubious distinction of failing to create a single net new job in half a century.

Also troubling is the city's current mix of jobs, radically less diversified than a half-century ago. Manufacturing jobs have shrunk to fewer than 300,000, and though the port is enjoying a resurgence, it handles under 40 percent of the Northeast's shipping, half the percentage it handled in its heyday five decades ago. Not that manufacturing jobs are sacred: New York's were traditionally concentrated in such low-wage sectors as the garment industry. Moreover, manufacturing employment is a smaller proportion of today's U.S. job mix than before, and emphatically not the best-paid segment. What's troubling is that many of the new industries haven't sprouted up in New York to replace the old ones—as they did in many other old eastern and midwestern cities buffeted by the same macroeconomic forces that swept over New York. With all its teaching hospitals, where is Gotham's biotechnology business? With all its data-dependent companies, where is its computer industry? With all its consumers, why is its retail sector so relatively small?

Today too much of the Big Apple's quarter-trillion-dollar gross city product is concentrated in financial services and tourism. Financial services is a wonderful industry, with some extremely high-paying jobs and a high-growth future. But a diversified economy is abler than a concentrated one to weather shocks, and the financial services industry in particular is volatile, subject to big swings in employment and earnings. In the four-year shakeout that followed the stock market crash of October 1987, the industry shed 34,000 jobs, almost all of them in New York. In 1987, Wall Street profits totaled a bare $1 billion, compared with a palmy $12.5 billion in 1996. And though in the bull market of the nineties the industry has created over 150,000 new jobs, four out of every five are not in New York. Finally, no one knows how technological changes will transform Wall Street—only that transform it they will.

If Gotham were still the overachieving regional job dynamo that it was in 1962, it would have 1 million more jobs than it now has.

One last comparison: 50 years ago the city had 250,000 people receiving public assistance; today the number, despite the mayor's successful workfare program, is almost 800,000. And as Heather Mac Donald found ("Gotham's Workforce Woes," Summer 1997), so powerfully destructive has the

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welfare culture of entitlement been, so deeply has it infected the city's poor, that even the non-welfare unskilled workforce often lacks basic workplace skills. Employer after employer lamented to Mac Donald that he couldn't find workers he could count on to show up, to take orders, to dress appropriately, to speak something like standard English, to treat customers and co-workers with civility.

Looking at this contrast between New York's past and present, who wouldn't agree that the expansive city is better than the stagnant one? It gives choices and opportunities to all classes of residents, sophisticated investors and unskilled immigrants alike. It lessens social tensions, as individuals concentrate on making the most of their own opportunities rather than resenting the good fortune of others. Growth feeds on itself, with new businesses suggesting ideas and creating opportunities for still newer ones. And private wealth confers public benefits, as witness such monuments as Grand Central Terminal, the Metropolitan Museum, the Public Library, and Rockefeller Center, not to mention the city's world-class private hospitals and charities.

What stopped New York from being a dynamo of economic expansion was an idea born of the city's great wealth: the idea that local government could ensure that all New Yorkers shared in the metropolis's good fortune by providing social services and income supports to raise the poor out of their poverty. Here were the flourishing businesses and rich individuals whose taxes could pay for it; here were the poor people who needed a helping hand. It turned out, however, that businesses and individuals were not as enthusiastic as the officials who promoted this idea about paying the taxes required to support the vast structure of public housing, social services, health care, and income supports for the poor that New York established. They expanded their businesses elsewhere, where costs were lower, or moved away entirely. It also turned out that all that effort didn't much help the poor. As they became dependent, the indicators of social pathology worsened sharply. And poverty in the city didn't decline.

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As the philosopher Maimonides knew nine centuries ago, the highest form of charity is giving those in need the tools to help themselves. It isn't making them dependent, even though most of New York's politicians today evidently think Maimonides was misguided. The *sine qua non* for upward mobility is a job, such as New York used to offer anyone who wanted it, and it is job opportunity that the mayor should proclaim as the purpose of his growth agenda. New York's foreign-born citizens and their children, who now form a majority in the city and whose hopes and aspirations are intertwined with the city's future, would be a powerful constituency for a Giuliani growth agenda.

It is not that the mayor has been negligent on the issue of the economy. In his first term he has taken important steps to make the city business-friendly. His emphasis on public safety has had a beneficial economic impact: as word has spread that New York is a safe city, it has become once more a major tourist attraction. For two years, the city's hotels have had full occupancy, and the mayor's reduction of the hotel tax has encouraged the resurgence. And New York residents, no longer apprehensive about going out at night, have brought boom times to the theaters and restaurants.

The mayor's war on organized crime's control of the trash industry has lifted the "mob tax" on waste disposal, saving city businesses some $300 million annually, and his ejection of mobsters from the Fulton Fish Market will also result in cost savings for consumers. His promise to carry the war on organized crime to other industries, such as construction, promises even further reductions in the city's mob tax, which currently drains an estimated $1 billion a year from the city's economy.

The mayor has taken on that sacred cow, the Port Authority, demanding control over the city's airports, crucial to the local economy. He has tirelessly argued that not only has the Port Authority developed Newark Airport more than New York's airports but it has also used profits from the airports to subsidize the PATH system, which benefits New Jersey commuters almost exclusively. And he has tried hard, if unsuccessfully, to get superstores built in the five boroughs.

But worthy as the mayor's efforts have been, he has not advanced an overall economic strategy that aims at making the city a truly competitive player in an increasingly competitive world economy. The cornerstone of such a strategy must be major tax cuts—major, not tentative.

Over the last 15 years, American businesses engaged in wholesale restructuring, downsizing, and outsourcing to reinvent themselves as highly competitive global enterprises. They became sensitive to every cost, including taxation. Especially when technology makes it easy for them to be anywhere they choose, why should they remain in New York, with per capita taxes that are higher than any other city in the nation except basket-case Washington, D.C., and twice as high as the next-most-taxed city, San Francisco? Why should they pay per capita taxes that are 536 percent higher than they'd have to pay if they moved to a city in the South or Southwest? On personal income, New Yorkers now pay taxes per capita that total just over 40 percent—more like Canadian than American levels and headed toward European social-democratic proportions. The taxes are so high that Princeton economist Andrew Haugwout estimates that if New York tries to raise them any higher, it will drive enough of the tax base out of town that it will collect less revenue overall.

As a 1996 study by Patrick Howie of Regional Financial Associates showed, businesses don't create jobs in places where costs—of which taxes are the easiest to control of four key components—are high. During the first half of the nineties, he found, high-tax New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco lost 217,100 jobs, while low-tax Atlanta, Phoenix, and Las Vegas added 827,000. Over a wide range of urban America, Howie discovered, low-cost, low-tax cities boomed, while high-cost, high-tax ones shrank or stagnated. And, of course, the nation's historical experience with tax cutting has amply shown its job-creating power: the 1920s' tax cut, President Kennedy's 1960s' tax cut, and President

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Reagan's tax cut in the 1980s all produced soaring growth in jobs and living standards.

The Giuliani administration has sensibly cut the hotel occupancy tax and the commercial rent tax, and it successfully pushed the state to cut the hated unincorporated business tax. But however valuable, these tax cuts fall vastly short of what is required. And the administration's major tax policy, like that of its predecessors', has been to cut taxes selectively for big corporations that threaten to leave the city. But because small and start-up businesses have created all of America's new jobs since 1970, this strategy fails to do anything for employment growth.

A better policy by far is for the mayor to push for total elimination of the city's personal income tax. Such a dramatic act would send an unmistakable signal that New York is serious about economic growth—as serious as it has been about reducing crime. It would affect all businesses equally, the small, job-creating ones as well as the behemoths. City Hall can't do this alone; it needs the State Legislature's approval—which is why the mayor must make a powerful pro-growth case if he is to generate the political pressure required for such a move.

New York is one of only four big U.S. cities—all of which have flirted with bankruptcy in living memory—to have both a city income tax and a sales tax. Arguably, to bring Gotham into line with the rest of the nation by eliminating one of these, City Hall could eliminate the sales tax just as well as the income tax. But eliminating the income tax would send a much better message, since it is a tax on creating wealth, not on consumption. If two taxpayers work hard to make $50,000, why should the one who spends it all on consumer goods get the tax break, and not the one who invests it? It is the making of the $50,000 the city wants to encourage, not how it should be spent.

True, cutting the income tax will cost the city treasury more than cutting the sales tax—$3.9 billion (or $531 per person) instead of $2.7 billion($372 per person). But it still would leave New York's taxes per capita almost twice as high as the average eastern and midwestern city, and still nowhere in sight of the low taxes of southern and western urban competitors. So the city would still have more tax cutting to do in the future. It could look forward to cutting its corporation tax, and ending its unique taxes on mortgages and the transfer of real property, which, as the Citizens Budget Commission correctly points out, hinders the adjustments in land and space use needed to accommodate economic change. And the mayor should demand that the state end its taxes on inheritance and gifts, so as not to drive out of New York the affluent elderly, who use almost no city services and provide money to the city's restaurants, department stores, and charities.

The mayor can't assume that tax cuts will immediately produce increased tax revenues generated by economic growth. As the Reagan tax cuts showed, though tax cutting assuredly does increase government revenues, no one can predict the timing and magnitude of that increase.

The total elimination of the personal income tax would send an unmistakable signal that New York is serious about economic growth.

So city spending would have to decline commensurately with the tax cuts; but again, such a cut would still leave total city spending more than twice as high as its average counterpart in the East and Midwest. No one could seriously argue that intelligently planned spending cuts will create hardships for New Yorkers. Those who say city spending can't be cut are like a free-spending spouse who replies to the need for economy by saying, "But we could never stop buying a new Mercedes every year; I couldn't live with a massage only once a week; I've always smoked Cohiba Habanas." The proper way to run a municipal economy—similar in this respect to a household's economy—is to ask, "What can we afford?" rather than to say, "Here is everything we have to buy, regardless of where the money

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comes from." New York is slowly eroding its economy's capital by maintaining a larger government than it can afford.

Stopping that long tradition requires a drastic change in basic outlook, which is why the mayor's educational campaign is so crucial. In fact, most cities usually drift and dwindle, like Venice, and don't change their ways unless they hit rock bottom. But neither of these fates is very happy, and while Mayors Ed Rendell and Dennis Archer deserve kudos for turning around Philadelphia and Detroit at their moments of catastrophe, those cities remain problem-plagued and almost surely will never regain anything like their former greatness. Rock bottom is too late.

Some items in the budget are obvious candidates for cuts—starting with Medicaid, by far the biggest component of New York's grossly swollen social welfare spending. It costs the city some $3 billion, almost 15 percent of total local revenue and by itself about the size of the budget's structural deficit. In all states except New York and Arizona, the federal gevernment pays half the Medicaid tab and the state picks up the other half. In New York, however, the city pays half the nonfederal share. Since city and state pay only 25 cents of every $1 paid out, officials have given in to the temptation to load on benefits like Christmas tree ornaments. Result: out-of-control spending, with only 32 percent of the total costs federally required and the rest mandated by the state. New York State's Medicaid expenditure is twice that of California, which has 70 percent more population, and per capita Empire State Medicaid costs are two and a half times those of the average of the next three most lavish states ("Medicaid's Fatal Attraction," Winter 1996). And New Yorkers are no healthier than Californians.

This year the Republican governor is up for reelection, a perfect time for the Republican mayor to press him to pledge that the state will take over full responsibility for Medicaid, an idea widely discussed for over a decade. If, even without a state takeover, Albany would reduce benefits to the level of other major industrial states, the city would save $1 billion.

The second candidate for big budget cuts is the municipal workforce. Even though the mayor has admirably reduced the number of city workers from 220,000 to 200,000, New York still has more of them per capita than all other big U.S. cities, and their compensation is richer than in any other major city, thanks to their lavish fringe benefits, which cost New Yorkers three times per capita more than Los Angeles spends per capita. If the city cut in half the differential between the total compensation of its employees and that of public employees in other big cities, it would save almost $4.5 billion.

The federal and state governments, along with two-thirds of the nation's large corporations and virtually all of its small businesses, require employees to pay a portion of the premium for their health insurance. Not New York City, which picks up the whole tab. The mayor should make this special benefit an issue and build the political and media support to remove it, contract negotiation by contract negotiation, from public employees. And he should do away with such productivity-sapping perks as the 12 annual paid holidays that city workers get, or the 20 days of annual paid vacation city employees get when they start a job.

The mayor should continue to reduce the size of the municipal workforce, including even the uniformed services, especially the fire department. And he should institute the privatization measures that other innovative big-city mayors have used so successfully, most notably Indianapolis Mayor Stephen Goldsmith. Goldsmith allows private companies, even foreign ones, to bid against public agencies for the pothole-filling contract, or the trash collection contract, or the bus-fixing contract, or even the contract to get welfare recipients into private employment. A private British company now runs his airport; private companies run his jail and his wastewater treatment plant. He has privatized 75 city services in all so far, with savings in each service ranging from 25 to 40 percent and accumulated savings in five years of $400 million. He has reduced the public workforce 45 percent. Imagine what that would do in New

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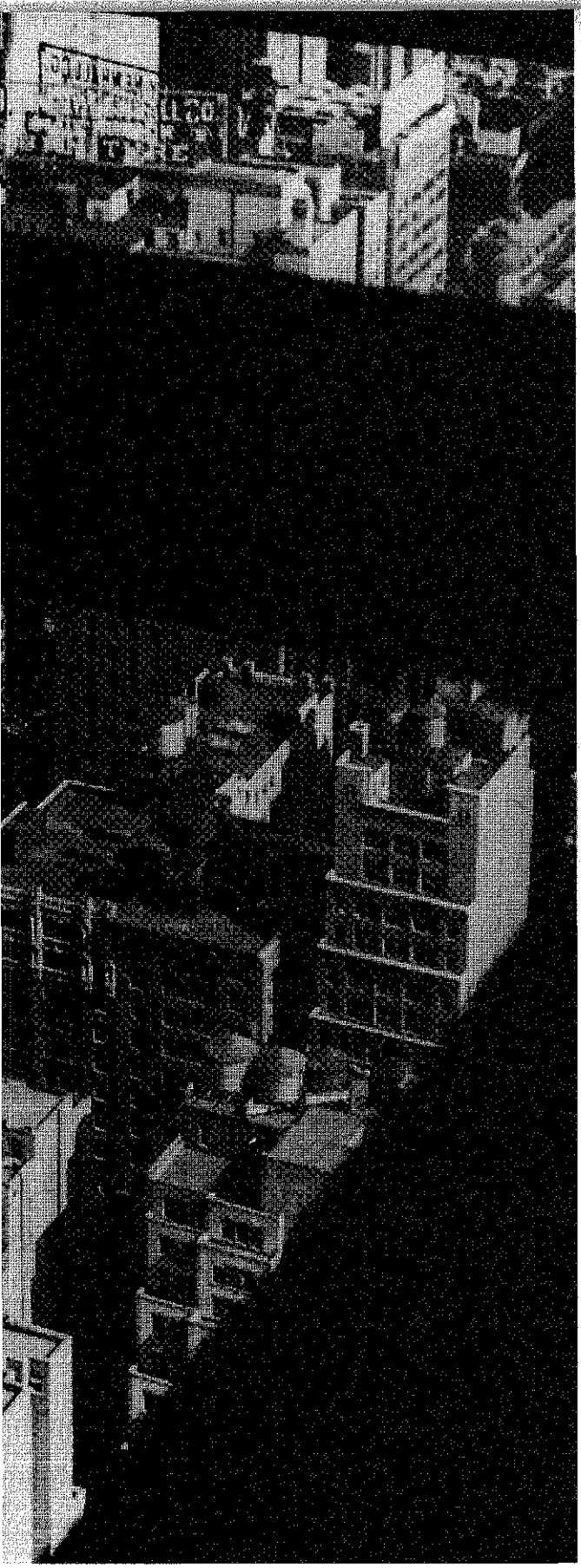

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

York, where the public workforce accounts for half of the $33 billion annual budget.

Goldsmith is quick to explain that there's nothing inherently more efficient about a private worker than a public one. He's perfectly willing to let public agencies bid against private companies for public services, and in some cases the public workers have been low bidders and won the contract. What counts, he says, is not that you have private workers but that you have competition. When public workers win contracts, it's because they jettison their bureaucratic, monopolistic practices—their work rules, their inflexibility, their overmanning, their excess of supervisors—and behave like any lean and mean private company. But they will do so only if they are fighting to keep their jobs.

If the mayor were to succeed in cutting taxes, transferring Medicaid to the state, privatizing city services, and restructuring government-employee benefit packages, he will have given the city a good chance of being the capital of the twenty-first century as it has been the capital of the twentieth century. But it won't be politically easy. He will have to take on all those who profit from New York's government bloat, from the Wall Street public finance departments and politically connected lawyers to the public relations consultants, the construction contractors, and the "nonprofit" social service providers. He will have to face down the politically mighty municipal unions. The city's liberal community can be trusted to attack all spending reductions as racist and an assault on the poor.

He can't do this without making the case for the excitement, the challenge, the economic opportunity and security that growth brings. A Manhattan Institute scholar recently remarked that, while he walked around New York, he was struck by the thought that so much of the city we all love was created by New Yorkers long dead. He felt like an inheritor, living off capital earned by his ancestors who once made New York grow ebulliently. The mayor can challenge us all to the worthy task of adding our own contribution to keep the city premier and unique. •

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THE SCHOOLS

School Choice: The Last Civil Rights Battle

Sol Stern

Thousands of the city's children languish in a gulag of failed schools that spans three boroughs. The mayor should use the threat—and the reality—of vouchers to force the system to reform.

Righting the city's massive education failure is one of Mayor Giuliani's most complicated challenges as he begins his second and last term. Solving this problem is not only an economic imperative for the city; it is also a pressing civil rights issue—perhaps the last genuine civil rights issue remaining on the table. Hundreds of thousands of poor and minority children attend demoralized, often violent, institutions that hardly deserve to be called schools at all. The Public Education Association has branded 14 of New York's 32 school districts as "dead zones," where almost every school is failing. Such failure denies the children of those minority communities the best opportunity they will ever have to escape dependency and other inner-city pathologies.

It is tragic enough that the children of the dead zones must attend failing schools. Compounding the problem, many must then trudge off into special education and bilingual classes, a desert of deeper failure within the already failing system. Originally designed as transitional assistance for poor students with English language deficits and other disabilities, these programs have become dead ends that handicap the students in even more crippling ways. Once assigned to these programs, the children rarely come out. Permanently ghettoized and marginalized, they often end up on welfare or in prison.

Meanwhile, the rest of us pay exorbitant taxes to maintain so dysfunctional a system. At $8,500 per pupil, New York City's education spending is about $2,000 above the national average. According to the Citizens Budget Commission, the city also pays its teachers 21 percent above the national average in salaries and 61.5 percent more in employee benefits. Does anyone really believe that the city gets 60 percent or 20 percent more, or any greater productivity at all, from its teachers? Or that the city's schools do better for poor minority students than the parochial schools, which manage to get the job done at one-third to one-half of the cost?

New York once enjoyed what many deemed a model urban education system. This "one best system," as it was called from the turn of the century on, supposedly rested on the most up-to-date principles of scientific management and pedagogy. Control, from the top down, lay in the hands of disinterested professional educators,

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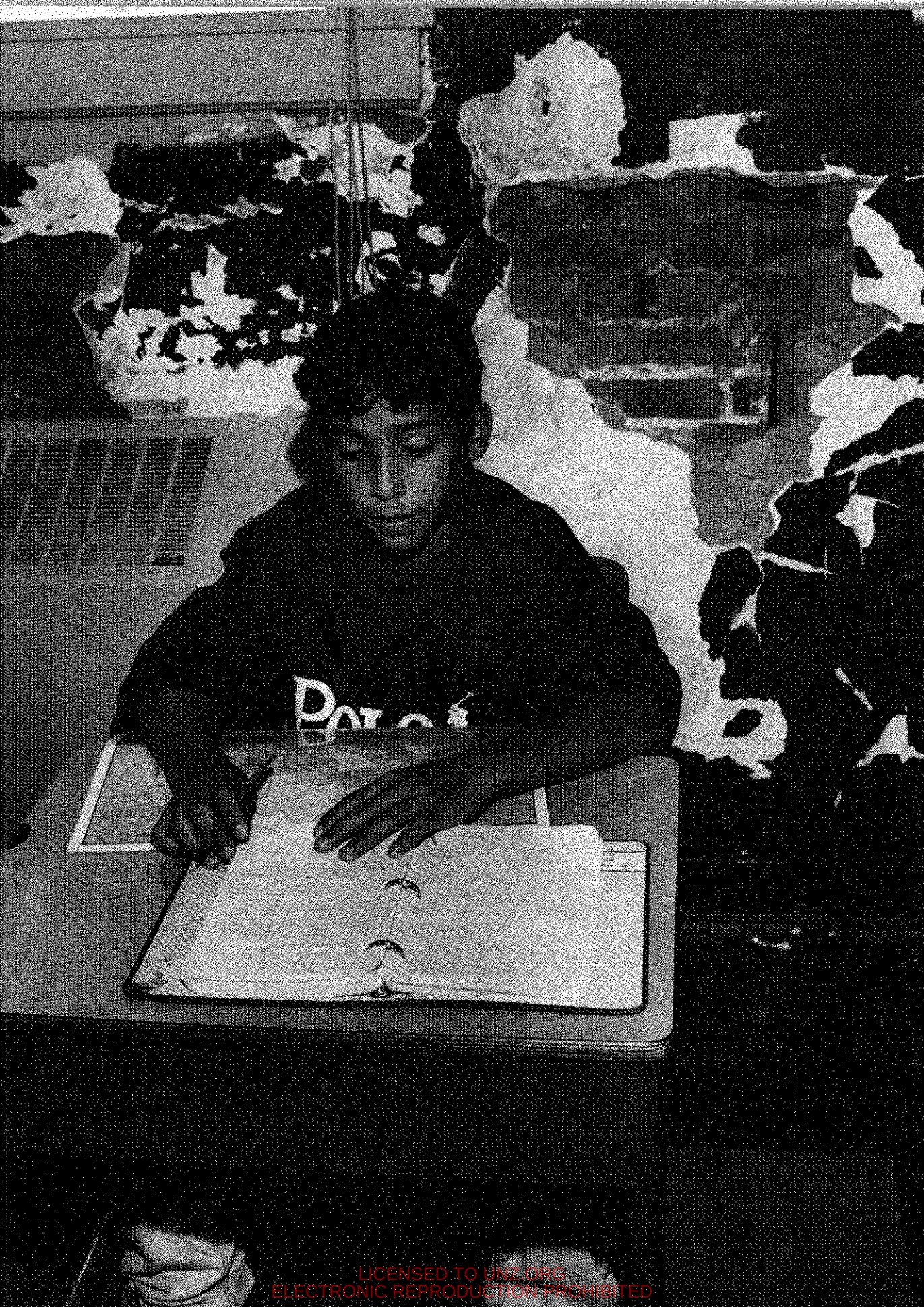

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meant to be insulated from the pressures of grubby politicians. For at least the first half of the century, the system worked reasonably well to assimilate the children of the poor and of the new immigrants into mainstream society.

What's left now, in Diane Ravitch's phrase, is an "obsolete factory," unable to prepare large numbers of young people for an information-based economy or for much of anything else. The system is too centralized, too unaccountable to parents and taxpayers, too resistant to competition. At a time when the whole world has awakened to the advantages of competition, decentralization, and market choice—when flexibility characterizes even real factories—the financial capital of the world is stuck trying to deliver its most important public service through a Soviet-style command-and-control structure.

"The lower an inner-city school sinks, the more its employees can command in extra funds and new jobs."

The one thing the system is very good at, though, is protecting the jobs of its 120,000 employees. The prevailing rule appears to be that the lower an inner-city school sinks, the more its adult employees can command in extra funds and new jobs. (Accordingly, Newark's and Washington, D.C.'s schools, which do even worse than New York's, spend between $1,000 and $2,000 more per pupil.) Occasional media exposés of waste and mismanagement miss the larger picture of institutional corruption: this is a system that lives on padding the payroll with more and more bureaucratic titles and jobs unrelated to the task of actually teaching children.

Mayor Giuliani's first-term record on battling the education behemoth was mixed. There were a few glorious moments, when he refused to accept the self-serving explanations for massive school failure that the education interest groups put forth—namely, that the system was "underfunded" or "lacked resources." Instead, he suggested that the failure stemmed more from the absence of competition and choice in public education. He also discomforted the public education establishment, rival politicians, and the *New York Times* by praising the truly underfunded Catholic schools for their superb record of educating minority children. In the mayor's analysis, what made the Catholic system distinctive were the principles of school autonomy, choice, and accountability to parents. Despite the relative penury of their schools, such an outlook inspired principals and teachers to extraordinary levels of effort.

Mayor Giuliani then stepped even more dramatically outside the city's conventional political discourse about education by enthusiastically supporting the School Choice Scholarship program, a new private initiative offering private and parochial school scholarships to 1,300 poor children trapped in failing city schools. Political leaders, he appeared to be saying, should be fighting to make sure that poor children receive a decent education by any means possible, even if it requires stepping away from the government agency that clearly has shown itself incapable of providing that education.

At one point the mayor went so far as to say that he would support using public funds for means-tested scholarships, though when the education establishment went ballistic, he quickly retreated. Nevertheless, he surely understood that if the large-scale private voucher program with which he actively aligned himself (by appearing at every one of the group's press conferences) succeeded, that success would inevitably advance the case for tax-funded vouchers. So in this respect he was sending a powerful, iconoclastic message about

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education: that competition was a good thing, even in education, and that all children—not merely the children of the middle class—had the right to escape from the government education monopoly when it didn't deliver the goods.

But on too many other occasions the mayor accommodated the same monopoly system's special interests. During the recent campaign, for instance, he seemed to accept his opponent's premise that "caring" meant throwing more money at a dysfunctional system. Thus, among the hundreds of millions of dollars in election-year goodies the mayor presented to the Board of Education was a $50 million allocation for new books. The check went to the same Bureau of Supplies that an official investigation had found to be a cesspool of corruption and that was paying significantly higher prices for books than those charged by retail bookstores.

The most disappointing moment of Giuliani's first term, though, came in 1996, when he concluded a retrograde labor agreement with the powerful United Federation of Teachers. The contract perpetuates the rules-driven, bureaucratic straitjacket that imprisons every school in the city. It also raises to even more absurd levels one of the basic operating principles of the system—that teachers get to spend less and less time with children, yet receive more and more money. This "We Don't Do Windows" contract consists in part of a long list of duties—from supervising children in the schoolyard to conducting homeroom classes—that teachers once willingly performed but that principals are now forbidden to ask them to do.

What accounts for these seemingly contradictory strands in Giuliani's education policies? Political calculations clearly played a part. Yet another possible explanation exists: the mayor is genuinely torn between two conflicting instincts. One part of him appears convinced that competition and greater choice can improve government services—even education. But then there is Rudy Giuliani the centralizer, who prefers to run all things from City Hall.

After all, centralized command and control is the organizational strategy that worked so well in his most spectacular first-term accomplishment, crime reduction. The police department operates like a military organization, with a chain of command running from the Giuliani City Hall to the commissioner's office down to every precinct house in the city. Having put the schools under the charge of an iron-willed chancellor cut from his own cloth, Rudy Giuliani may now believe that Chancellor Rudy Crew can improve individual schools by barking out orders from Board of Ed headquarters at 110 Livingston Street. But a school is not a precinct house. Schools work best when they enjoy autonomy and have strong leaders who have the authority to determine the best approach to improving student performance and who are held accountable for results.

No one but the mayor (and maybe not even he) knows for sure which of these two radically different approaches to education reform—command and control, or competition and school autonomy—will guide him through the next four years. What is certain is that the stakes are extremely high. The city cannot maintain its present level of prosperity when so many children either don't graduate from high school or come out of school without the skills needed to become productive adults. Nor, in the long run, can the city retain its middle class unless it increases the number of acceptable schools.

As he formulates his education reform strategy, the mayor would do well to think nationally as well as locally. Emerging from other inner-city communities with their own "dead zones," the outline of a new national urban education reform movement is growing distinct. In Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Washington, D.C., the movement is trying to win for minority families a greater degree of the educational choice that the middle class takes for granted. Empowering the poor with school choice through vouchers—public money that they can use in accredited private schools—helps some children immediately by liberating them from failing public schools. But there is also good reason to believe that the threat of losing its children will force the monopoly public educa-

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tion system to become more responsive to parents and taxpayers and make some of the necessary changes that lead to public school improvement. Thus, for example, in states where support for a voucher system has been strong, it has been easier for school reformers to get legislation authorizing the creation of independent charter schools within the public school system and to get modification of teacher tenure rules. And last year, when philanthropist Virginia Gilder offered to pay private school tuition for all children attending one of the worst public schools in Albany, the education authorities immediately installed a dynamic new principal at the failing school and anxiously instituted a host of other programs to try to get the school back on track.

"Mayor Giuliani should support vouchers because it's the right thing, the moral thing, to do."

The national movement for school choice is now truly bipartisan and multiracial. It includes Governor Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin, a white Republican, and former superintendent of Milwaukee schools Howard Fuller, a black Democrat. The Republican governor of Minnesota, Arne Carlson, recently persuaded his Democratic-controlled State Legislature to pass a bill authorizing education tax credits for parochial schools. A significant bipartisan bloc of school choice proponents has arisen in the U.S. Congress. Fueled by growing anger over the performance of public schools in the minority community, the choice movement will continue to grow. Numerous recent public-opinion polls confirm that an overwhelming majority of blacks (including, according to the Empire State Survey on Education, 61 percent in New York State) now support some form of publicly funded tuition vouchers that would allow them to send their children to private or parochial schools.

Thus, Mayor Giuliani has a unique and historic opportunity, not only to begin the task of restructuring the city's public education system but also to influence powerfully the emerging national debate on education reform. For both reasons, *City Journal* believes that Mayor Giuliani should make school choice a centerpiece of his education reform strategy.

The mayor should, of course, continue to support the privately funded voucher plans. But the moment is right to cross the Rubicon and announce his support for tax-supported, means-tested vouchers for poor children stuck in New York City's failing schools. He should do this because it is the right thing, the moral thing, to do. As the writer Jonathan Rauch put it in a recent *New Republic* article: "Why should the poor be denied more control over their most important means of social advancement, when soccer moms and latte-drinkers take for granted that they can buy their way out of a school (or a school district) that abuses or annoys them?" The mayor could make this argument resonate powerfully in New York, particularly in the educational dead zones.

Mayor Giuliani should support school choice because it also happens to be the smart thing to do politically. It is an issue that used to attract big-city Democrats, until the teachers' unions captured the Democratic Party. Now it's just waiting to be grabbed by the popular mayor of the country's premier city looking to have a national political impact as an education innovator.

Mayor Giuliani already has considerable political capital invested in this idea through his involvement with the private School Choice Scholarship program, which, despite grumbling from education officials and the teachers' union, has won favorable press coverage and clearly has helped the mayor in the minority community. When, last

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spring, he gave a stirring speech about the importance of a good education to the 1,300 winners (out of 22,000 applicants) of the scholarship lottery—most of them blacks and Hispanics from the educational dead zones—he received a standing ovation.

No doubt the mayor will hear much cautionary advice from within his own inner circle, from the public education establishment, and even from parts of the business community, warning that, despite its apparent popularity in the black community, school choice remains a marginal and politically risky policy in a city like New York. Why should he take such risks when he doesn't even have the power to implement publicly funded vouchers anyway? On the other hand, advisors will say, thanks to the new school governance law and his excellent relationship with Chancellor Rudy Crew, the mayor does have more power over the day-to-day operations of the central Board of Education than did previous mayors. Thus he'll be urged—and sorely tempted—to build a national political reputation as an "education mayor" by trying to raise school performance dramatically through top-down initiatives dictated from City Hall and 110 Livingston Street.

The problem is that the 110 Livingston Street strategy is just as risky as the voucher approach. After all, top-down reforms have been tried in New York City for decades—without any transformative effect at all. What are the odds that they will suddenly work now? Rudy Crew may be a take-no-prisoners administrator, but so was Joe Fernandez. Where are you now, Joe Fernandez?

True, only the State Legislature and the Board of Regents can authorize even a limited publicly funded voucher experiment, and the teachers' unions and other interest groups would immediately challenge in the courts any voucher bill passed. But that shouldn't stop Mayor Giuliani from campaigning for choice, any more than the fact that the federal government sets immigration policy deterred him from becoming a national champion of new immigrants. Nor should the fact that the courts have in the past held that taxpayer-supported vouchers for religious schools violated the establishment clause of the Constitution deter the mayor. In fact, there is reason to believe that, with four separate cases involving state aid to religious schools now making their way to the Supreme Court, the justices will change their minds again.

But whatever the courts say about this issue, endorsing school choice now, on the basis that it provides equal rights for poor children trapped in failing schools, will enable the mayor to launch a different kind of public conversation on education. He can take the civil rights aspect of school choice into the minority community, with allies like ex-congressman Floyd Flake, a sponsor of voucher legislation in the last Congress and a board member of the School Choice Scholarship program. He might also consider holding dramatic public hearings on school failure, in which students, teachers, and principals from the dead zones would testify about what it is like trying to improve schools under the present centralized regulations and work rules. He can invite comparisons with Catholic and private schools, to show what autonomous and accountable schools can accomplish. By challenging New Yorkers to rethink how public education is organized, the mayor can begin pushing against the legislative, legal, and political roadblocks to fundamental reform.

Championing vouchers doesn't mean the mayor should ignore the public schools' day-to-day travails. This is not a zero-sum game. Quite the contrary: the voucher strategy will give him even more leverage to demand immediate, systemic reforms from the Board of Education and greater productivity from school employees. Nothing concentrates the mind of education officials and teachers' union leaders on reform like the threat of vouchers or other forms of privatization.

A list of all the changes needed would be very long. But here are the four most important within-the-system reforms the mayor should press for as he simultaneously fights the longer-range battle for school choice:

The Teachers' Contract. It is impossible to exaggerate the destructive impact of the teachers' con-

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tract on the workplace culture of the system's 1,000 schools. The present document provides no rewards for hard work and excellence in the classroom, virtually no penalties for incompetence or laziness, and no way even to monitor the productivity of teachers. Only seniority earns higher pay. Thus, some dedicated younger teachers work long hours for relatively low pay, while some of their older, perhaps burned-out colleagues work lackadaisically to the contractual minimum of 5.5 hours per day for 180 days per year at higher pay. The principals, in effect CEOs of what are the equivalents of medium-sized business enterprises (typically with budgets of $5 million to $10 million and with 100 to 200 employees on the payroll), presently cannot fire or hire their staff, cannot ask their teachers to attend meetings after school hours, cannot request that teachers report for work more than one day prior to the official school opening. To grasp the harm done to the education of our children by this governing document, the mayor should ask himself how well he could manage his own City Hall staff under similar work-rule constraints.

"The teachers' union says no to vouchers, no to charter schools, no to recertification, and no to merit pay."

The present contract runs out in the year 2000. The mayor should start the groundwork now for removing the contract's worst restrictions by educating the public about them. Doubtless, the teachers' union will wage a media campaign against the mayor, accusing him of seeking to undermine, even to destroy, public education with his support for vouchers and his criticism of the union contract. In response the mayor should say that his purpose is not to harm public education but rather to help children being damaged beyond repair by their current schools and to prod the public schools to accept the reforms that will make them effective. The mayor could use the occasion to remind New Yorkers that the union is not only saying no to vouchers; it is also saying no to charter schools, no to requiring its teachers to be periodically recertified, no to merit pay. The mayor could also point out that, with regard to the labor contract, the union continues to say no to allowing principals to hire on the basis of merit rather than having to fill openings with high-seniority teachers who want to transfer in from other schools, no to staff development after hours, no to an expedited process for removing incompetent teachers.

The mayor could then make the case that if teachers really want to preserve public education, the time has come for their union to start saying yes to a new contract that liberates schools from the strangulation of perverse work rules. It should be a contract that values and rewards excellence and hard work in the classroom—a contract, in short, that provides a blueprint for schools that are flexible, autonomous, and accountable.

We will know that the mayor has succeeded in advancing that general goal if, at the very least, the next contract has such new provisions as these: it does away altogether with the provision that allows teachers to transfer to schools based on their seniority in the system; it creates mechanisms to monitor the work done by teachers beyond the six-hour school day; it pays teachers according to merit; it allows principals to require teachers to attend a reasonable number of meetings after school hours and to report at least a week before the official opening of the school year.

Charter Schools. As he campaigns for school choice, the mayor will be in a better position politically to get a strong charter-school bill enacted in Albany. Often started by community organizations, universities, or groups of teachers or parents, charter schools are public schools that operate under charter from the state education

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authority rather than from the local school district. The charter grants these schools independence from bureaucratic central regulations and from most union work rules, leaving them free to create their own institutional arrangements and distinctive cultures based on the needs of their students. Yet the government agency that grants the charter holds them strictly accountable for their performance and will close them down if they don't fulfill the contract's explicit performance standards. Thirty states have passed such legislation, and over 600 charter schools now operate around the country. Independent evaluations of the first group of them have come up with very positive findings so far. The charter schools are enrolling a large number of minority students, parents are happy with them, and many students have shown gains in academic achievement. Charter schools have become laboratories of reform, and their successful innovations have persuasively demonstrated the advantages of school autonomy, accountability, and greater choice.

Right now a very strong charter bill endorsed by Governor Pataki lingers in the Democratic-controlled State Assembly, simply because the teachers' unions and other education industry interests oppose it. The bill would make charter schools answerable to the State Education Department and would free them from the union contract. The mayor could use his support for vouchers as a lever to pry loose a strong bill: he can point out that those who oppose vouchers on the grounds that they take money and students away from the public school system can make no such argument about charter schools, and are hard put to explain their intransigence.

Teacher and Principal Tenure. Mayor Giuliani and Chancellor Crew have come out against lifetime tenure for principals. It certainly makes sense that the people to whom we entrust the running of schools with 1,000 or more children and multi-million-dollar budgets should not have lifetime job guarantees but rather should have three- to five-year performance contracts. If they perform well, they should be rehired and even rewarded with bonus pay. If they fail, they should not get another contract.

Welcome as is the mayor and chancellor's initiative on eliminating principal tenure, they have put the cart before the horse. It is illogical and counterproductive to hold the managers of an enterprise to performance standards when the same managers are not permitted to hold their staff to some standard of performance. In other words, elimination of tenure for both principals and teachers has to be a package deal. The mayor and the chancellor are in a strong position now to propose such a measure to the Legislature and then to explain to the public that no one to whom we entrust our children should have a lifetime job guarantee. When teachers and principals get evaluated on the basis of their efforts to improve learning, not on the seniority credits they have accumulated, we will have taken a giant step toward a more functional public education system.

Special Education and Bilingual Education. Special education has become an outrageous scandal. No one tries to hide it; few even try to defend it anymore. Ordained by court mandates and by federal legislation (especially the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), special education has become a huge jobs program for an army of teachers, psychologists, social workers, aides, and lawyers. About 140,000 students get condemned to this dysfunctional program at a cost to New York of over $2 billion a year—nearly one-quarter of the city's total education budget.

As Kay Hymowitz has pointed out in *City Journal* (Summer 1996), this enormous expenditure might be tolerable if the program helped the needy children consigned to it (often coercively) to become productive citizens. But that is very far from the case. The majority of children in the program are not disabled in any conventional sense—unable to hear or confined to a wheelchair, say. Instead, they are behavior problems whom teachers do not want to deal with in regular classrooms. They end up labeled "emotionally disturbed" or "learning disabled" and shunted off into special ed, which has become a convenient and lucrative way for the system to pretend it is socializing children from troubled families—no easy task, in truth. Not only do these bogus psychological classifications allow school officials to dump into full-time special edu-

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cation many children who really fall outside the law's very clear requirements, but a large percentage of those children then become trapped permanently in a program that damages them even further. Two-thirds of special-education students never graduate from high school, and of the remainder who do, only a handful ever receive a Regents diploma.

Much the same could be said about the much smaller (about 84,000 students) but similarly counterproductive bilingual education programs. For at least the first half of the century, the school system successfully absorbed New York City's immigrant children. The method it used, as in every other country in the world, was rapid immersion in the national language. Starting about 30 years ago, however, and with the best of intentions, the city accepted a consent decree that required separate instruction in the native languages of thousands of children. The intention of the court mandate and subsequent legislation was to provide a transition period in which the child who arrived speaking only a foreign language could gradually acclimatize to instruction in English. Instead we have created semipermanent bilingual ghettos in our school system (mostly in Spanish) for these already disadvantaged children. Thousands of schoolchildren now spend their entire six years in elementary school in Spanish-only classes.

"Elimination of tenure for both principals and teachers has to be a package deal."

Though the mayor has little direct power to modify special education and bilingual programs, he does have a very potent bully pulpit on these issues. Minority community sentiment is overwhelmingly against special education, and a growing number of Hispanic parents are also beginning to realize that bilingualism is a dead end for their children, since they'll never gain the English proficiency they need to succeed in America. Indeed, in many places around the country, Hispanic parents are in open revolt, demanding that bilingual classes "let our children go." Parents in Bushwick have sued to liberate their kids from bilingual ed. According to a *Los Angeles Times* poll, 84 percent of California's Hispanics oppose bilingual ed, and an initiative calling for the end of compulsory bilingual programs will likely be on the ballot next June. Ron Unz, the leader of California's bilingual revolt, pointed out in *City Journal* (Autumn 1997) that the only people now trying to preserve the $320 million program are the teachers and administrators who benefit directly from it.

Mayor Giuliani can capitalize on these changing attitudes and take the fight on special education and bilingual ed to the coalition of union leaders, state legislators, and other education industry interests that are blocking reform. He can say something like this to them: "I believe in letting children escape failing public schools. If you don't want vouchers to take the children away from you, if you want to preserve the idea of public education, then you must make the system more rational, more productive, more accountable. You can start to do that and show your good faith by drastically overhauling the city's out-of-control special education program, returning it to its original intention of aid for seriously handicapped children, rather than as a dumping ground for every difficult-to-educate child. Second, you can stop forcing thousands of immigrant children into bilingual ghettos, in which they never learn the rudiments of the English language."

These are all fights that Rudy Giuliani can win. Beyond any specific education reform mentioned here, he is in a position to make people believe that it doesn't have to be this way, that creating reasonably effective schools, even in the poorest neighborhoods, is not beyond the ability of a richly endowed city like New York. •

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The Real Welfare Problem is Illegitimacy

Heather Mac Donald

Putting mothers to work will never solve the welfare problem, if generations of new clients keep forming before our eyes. Mayor Giuliani can't single-handedly cure the illegitimacy scourge, but he can begin to change the upside-down terms of our social service universe.

Standing uncertainly in the middle of a lavish high school day-care center on Manhattan's Upper West Side is the future downfall of welfare reform. Eighteen-year-old Tamiesha has just dropped off her two-year-old and now watches impassively as the baby throws his bowl of Cheerios over his head. While a host of beaming day-care workers rush to clean up the child, Tamiesha, tall and so thin that her slacks hang from her hips in folds, distractedly pours a gold necklace from one hand to another. As usual, she has arrived late and is at that moment missing her second-period class, but no one seems in a hurry to get her on her way. The day-care director has tried to persuade her to come on time, without much of an impact. "I tell 'em I can't give them a 100 percent guarantee," Tamiesha explains. Tamiesha may not strike an observer as an overwhelmingly fit parent, but she has no intention of getting help from a husband. "I don't want to get married," she says emphatically. "My aunts 'n' stuff tell me what's going on, and it's, like, a hassle."

Unless girls like Tamiesha stop having babies, the 1996 federal welfare reform law will surely disappoint. The law unleashed a flurry of activity to get welfare recipients off the rolls; unfortunately, no one is watching the front door, where the next two generations of dependents are forming right now. Illegitimacy is the greatest cause of long-term poverty in this country; unless it comes down, the poverty rate won't, either. While some welfare mothers will thrive under the new welfare-to-work regime and will succeed in creating a stable home for their children, the majority will drift in and out of low-paid work for the rest of their lives, futilely seeking the grail of a permanent, "living-wage" job.

But the most pressing goal for welfare reform is ensuring the welfare of the children. While having an illegitimate child often dooms the mother to a life of poverty, illegitimacy may doom her child to far worse. Prisons, foster-care homes, and homeless shelters teem with fatherless children. Tamiesha's baby is three times more likely to fail at school, three times more likely to commit suicide, and from 20 to 33 times more likely to suffer child abuse than are the children of low-income married parents. His prospects in later life are just as grim: 70 percent of long-term prisoners, 60 percent of rapists, and 75 percent of adolescents charged with murder grew up without fathers. The risks to children living outside a two-

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parent home go beyond social failure, as witness New York City's never-ending cortege of tiny coffins containing children beaten, suffocated, and scalded by their mothers' boyfriends.

No urban reform could have a greater effect, if successful, than attacking the culture of single parenthood. Taking on the problem in New York City, however, requires great audacity. Not only does New York State have the sixth-highest incidence of illegitimate births in the nation—38 percent in 1995, just below such backwaters as Mississippi and Louisiana—but the city's official ideology has for decades treated single "parenting" as simply one "lifestyle" choice among many. What's more, social policy faces natural

Photographs by Mary Ellen Mark

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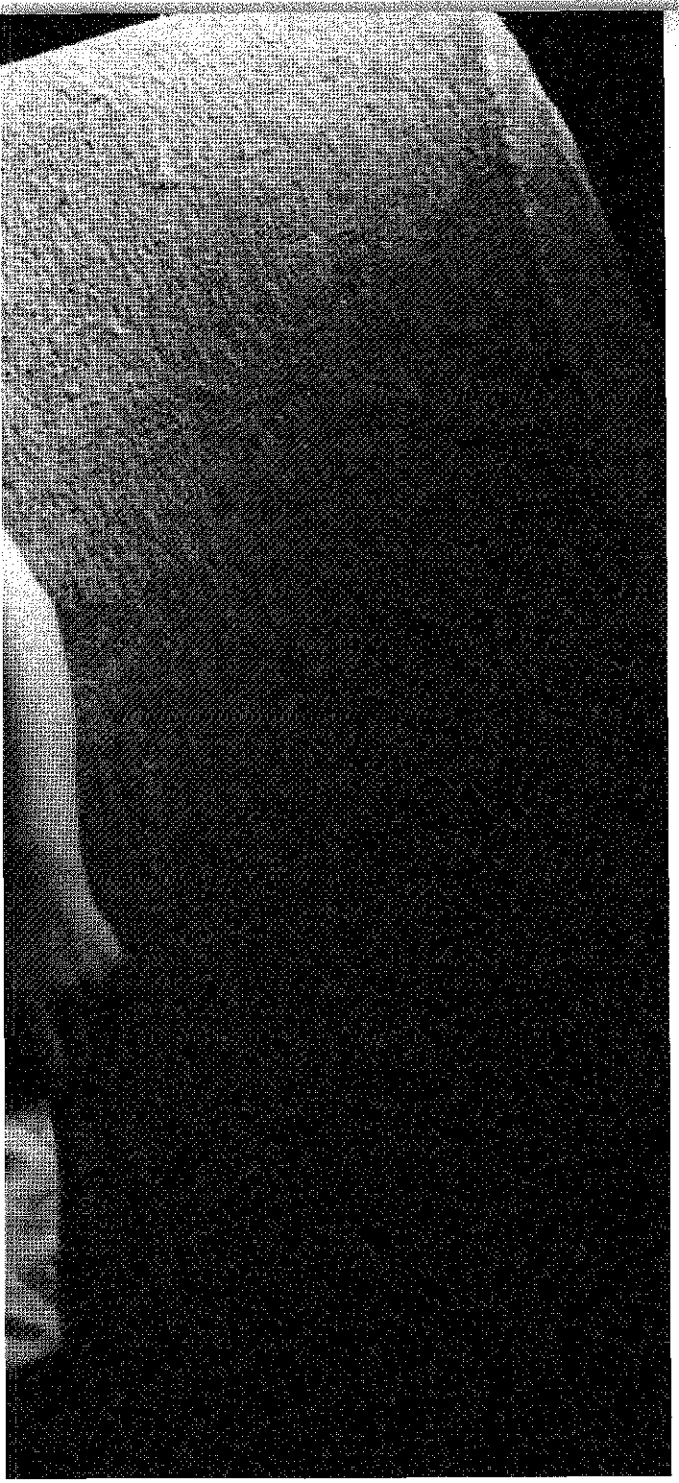

limits when confronting a problem as vast, complex, and personal as out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

Even so, the arena for action is large. New York's last mayoral term demonstrated the moral force that a strong leader in public office can generate. By speaking clearly about the obligations of people receiving public assistance, Mayor Giuliani shifted the ethic of welfare and made work part of the equation in New York. He should now set a national precedent and do the same for illegitimacy—the other, and much more important, part of the welfare equation. He should announce unequivocally that the most pressing issue affecting child welfare is the breakdown of the family. The persistently lagging well-being of the city's black children, he should point out—from low birth weight to school failure—is inextricably linked to the prevalence among blacks of teen pregnancies and illegitimate births. More social services, the mayor should emphasize, can never compensate for the absence of a father.

Such a message will amount to a declaration of war. Any political leader who dares to voice a preference for marriage over single "parenting" will face fierce opposition from the city's elites. Most perversely, the mayor can expect resistance from the city's child welfare advocates, who are determinedly agnostic regarding family structure. When asked if her organization takes a position on the two-parent family, Gail Nayoweth, director of the Citizens Committee for Children, responded that family configuration "does not matter to us"—an astounding admission. She quickly added, "I shouldn't say it doesn't matter to us. We *will* say, you need a family"—not much of a concession, since the question is: what kind of family? Like virtually every advocate and service provider in the city, Nayoweth apparently believes that government services are more important than a resident father: "When we talk about the family, [our goal] is to help them access services." Here, in a nutshell, is the ideology that New York's leaders must refute. To repeat: the city can offer "services" from here to eternity; they will never provide the crucial nurturing and support of two married parents.

Any defender of marriage can expect charges of racism and "classism." Emily Marks, head of the United Neighborhood Houses, a coalition of local settlement houses, accused me of bias against the poor when I asked if her organization was concerned about family breakdown. Then, displaying a favored debating tactic of the single-parent

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lobby, she established a precondition for marriage: "It all goes back to the job situation," she maintained. "Jobs are just not available."

This is doubly specious. First, plenty of poor people find jobs and marry. Second, Marks's reasoning presumes that children are an inevitability and marriage a mere add-on—when conditions permit. But if, as Marks claims, no jobs exist that would allow men to support a family, why are women having babies with them anyway? The question answers itself: because they expect the state to pick up the tab. Marks belongs to the right-to-have-a-baby school, which holds that regardless of the economic and emotional stability of the parents, a woman has a right to a baby at the government's expense. The question turns only on her rights, not the baby's fate.

It is this entire constellation of apologetics and destructive thinking that the city—in its role as a national model, if Mayor Giuliani chooses to assume it—will have to combat. City administrators should call in their social service contractors and ask them to fight vigorously the prevailing belief that unwed teens can raise babies, given the proper support. The city should also demand that the providers promote marriage for adults who want or have children. Those providers who put up an argument should be dropped. The city should also make sure that providers bring the concept of adoption out of deep freeze. From the moment an expectant single mother walks into a city health clinic, and above all if she is a teen, the nurses should make clear that she is embarking on a remarkably difficult path. City health workers should be required to discuss adoption as the most loving alternative for the child. Many illegitimate children will end up in foster care anyway, from which adoption is much harder to achieve.

Isn't it quixotic and self-destructive for the mayor to try to change attitudes so deeply ingrained and hotly defended as all these? Isn't he doomed to failure? In taking on this challenge, Mayor Giuliani can look not only to his own success in changing assumptions about welfare and work but also to the national campaign against smoking, which created a stigma practically out of thin air and virtually overnight. Today, no politician with a taste for media acclaim ignores teen smoking; yet if just one-quarter of the energy dedicated to that issue could successfully come to bear on illegitimacy, the public health benefits, not to mention the social benefits, would be vastly larger.

Accordingly, the mayor should have the city launch a media campaign, arguing that bearing a child out of wedlock is irresponsible and, for men, cowardly. Children need resident, married fathers, the advertisements should say; furthermore, the government will bring all the weight of the law against men who evade their parental obligations. The mayor should also call on church leaders, school principals, and youth leaders to join him in advocating marriage as the proper environment for raising children. Changes like this will take more than one mayoral term to achieve, but if Mayor Giuliani can begin to shift local attitudes, he will have won the hardest part of the battle.

But in addition to conducting a battle of ideas, the city should comb through its policies and eliminate all explicit or hidden encouragements for illegitimacy. To be blunt, rather than easing the way for single mothers, the city should restore the burden of having a child out of wedlock. Only in the last three decades did society facilitate illegitimacy, with predictable results. First to go should be the LYFE centers, as the high schools call their day-care centers. If there's any doubt that the centers have put an official stamp of approval on teen childbearing, just ask high school students what they think about them. A Brandeis ninth-grader, sauntering to class, summed up the prevailing attitude nicely: "Sure it's normal; schools are supposed to provide shit like that." Many of the nurseries are placed front and center; at Brandeis, the large, cheerful room is virtually the first classroom students encounter on entering the building. They are extravagantly funded at $10,000 a girl and boast lavish staffing ratios and employee perks. The obvious message is that the city considers teen parenthood a normal, highly valued part of school.

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Like many of the city's social services, the LYFE centers embrace precisely the wrong values. Mothers don't have to feed or visit their children during their lunch hour (or at any time during the day, for that matter), so they can hang out with their friends. Such freedom, LYFE center advocates say, helps teen mothers preserve some of the "giddiness" of adolescence—just what a teen mother should lose as soon as possible. The LYFE workers don't even dare ask the mothers to stay after school for parenting classes, for that would infringe on their autonomy. Instead, some centers regularly pull the mothers out of class for parenting and group therapy sessions. But, after all, the ostensible purpose of the program is to help young mothers graduate by facilitating child-care arrangements; missing classes violates that purpose.

The LYFE centers are a corrosive presence in the schools. They should be closed. In their place, the city should open a school for pregnant teens and teen mothers in each borough and require all unwed teen mothers to attend. Those schools should insist on the highest standards of behavior for the mothers and include a mandated curriculum in child care, over and above the full academic curriculum.

Does such an arrangement "stigmatize" teen mothers, as advocates will immediately charge? Perhaps; and if it does, so much the better. By having a child out of wedlock, a girl has embarked on a course destructive both to herself and to her child. Society once understood this, and understood as well that attaching an onus to bad behavior was the best way to prevent it. (Stigma prevented illegitimacy from rising for the first three decades after the adoption of Aid to Families with Dependent Children.) But more important than the stigma, removing unwed teen mothers from their regular schools destroys the harmful fiction that they are still entitled to a carefree adolescence. Having decided to become mothers, they must become adults as quickly as possible.

The mayor should lobby the State Legislature for authority to withhold additional benefits from mothers who have more children while on welfare. In New Jersey the birthrate among welfare mothers has fallen more than 20 percent following the introduction of such a policy. As an alternative to cash payments for teen mothers, the mayor should issue a challenge to both the State Legislature and to the city's many philanthropists: let's build a public assistance system that actually ensures the well-being of children. Following the suggestion of *City Journal* editor Myron Magnet, the city should help create a pilot program requiring teen mothers on public assistance to live in group homes supervised by responsible adults (not by social workers imbued with the conventional don't-hold-the-poor-responsible attitude). The purpose of these group homes would be to give the children of children an upbringing that will allow them to break the cycle of poverty. They would, in other words, make good on the long-deferred promise of AFDC: that it protects children.

The mayor should have the city launch a media campaign, arguing that bearing a child out of wedlock is irresponsible, and for men, cowardly.

The homes' supervising adults would teach the teens how to be parents and provide them with the moral formation that may have been missing in the teens' own upbringing. They would strictly monitor the mothers' school attendance, homework, and alcohol and drug use. To learn household management and responsibility, the teens would help cook and clean. Again, the overriding point of such instruction is to teach the mothers how to provide cognitive and moral, as well as maternal, nurture for their children. The mayor should call on private donors to fund the experiment; the teens' government benefits could help defray the costs. The program should be rigorously evaluated. If the pilot succeeds in improving the welfare of teens' children and can be replicated cost-efficiently, it could be the best hope for breaking the perpetuation of the underclass.

The city should reward marriage, not illegitimacy. Each year, for instance, New York sets aside

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many thousands of public housing units and federal housing vouchers for homeless families, the vast majority of them, almost by definition, families without fathers. The city should give preference to married families in the distribution of public housing, explicitly articulating its reasons for doing so: that a home in which both parents have publicly committed themselves to each other and to their future children is the safest environment for children. So, too, with day care: many of the categories of applicants that now take priority for it, such as parents who have abused their children, teen mothers, and homeless families, are near stand-ins for single parents. Here, too, as in all its discretionary benefits for families, the city should give priority to married parents—and at the very least should not give preference to single parents.

It takes two to make a baby, yet the city has been lax in placing any responsibility on fathers. Fewer than 25 percent of the city's recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF, previously AFDC) have child-support orders, in large part because many welfare mothers refuse to cooperate in establishing paternity, despite the law's requirement. Fewer than 5,000 have suffered any sanction for noncooperation. The city should step up enforcement of the cooperation requirement and institute an aggressive program to establish paternity in its hospitals. Elsewhere, such programs have had good results.

Once the city has established paternity and obtained a child-support order, it should enforce that obligation with the same zeal with which it enforces the welfare work requirements, for doing so strengthens the value that fathers, not the state, bear responsibility for their children. New York State has foolishly exempted low-income males from support obligations, as if poverty were an excuse for evading parental duties. Persuading the Assembly to remove the many roadblocks it has placed in the way of child-support enforcement is a distant hope. But the city should at least begin to make the case for encouraging responsible fatherhood. It should argue that if a father has little or no income, he should have to participate in the workfare program; if he is already in it, his hours should increase. If the mother is on welfare, she should have the option of requiring the father to perform her required workfare duties. Such a right would increase the mother's incentive to identify the father, and would give her greater bargaining power over him. If the unwed father is still a student, he should be banned from playing on his school's sports teams or from student leadership positions, as was the practice into the 1960s. In the schools, sex education should mean only one thing: etching indelibly into the teen brain that if you have a child out of wedlock, you will face extraordinary burdens, including having to pay years of child support. Kids should hear that sex is for adults, mature enough to accept its responsibilities.

The city funds programs for gay prostitutes with a drug habit, promiscuous mothers who beat their children, and teen thugs, among others.

Should the city decide to reward marriage instead of out-of-wedlock childbearing, it would reverse a local rule of social policy: the less responsible the individual, the more likely New York is to spend public dollars on him. Thus, the city funds programs for gay prostitutes with a drug habit, promiscuous mothers who beat their children, heroin-addicted shoplifters, female murderers, and teen thugs, among others. Reversing this indiscriminate social spending should be the mayor's next challenge, after removing the incentives to illegitimacy.

The undisputed beneficiaries of this largesse are the nonprofit social service agencies to which the government delegates its good intentions. The deal to date for the agencies has been: here's a problem; here's some taxpayer money; see what you can do. If, in the next fiscal cycle, the problem does not appear solved, the city will hand over more money. Officials rarely check to see what the agency actually accomplished. "It's easy money," confesses a youth-service provider in

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Brooklyn. The city Department for Youth and Community Development pays his agency one 20-minute visit a year—in the morning, when no programs are actually running—and writes a check for the next year.

As a result of this freewheeling generosity, the city's social service infrastructure is without parallel anywhere. State spending on social services accounts for twice the share of personal income as in the rest of the country, according to the Citizens Budget Commission. In 1994, the last year for which figures are available, New York City paid out $2.4 billion of local taxpayers' money for over 2,600 social service contracts—about the same as the city spent on the police and far exceeding the national norm. Including state and federal money would probably triple the total tab. A disproportionate amount of that sum went to executive salaries, far higher than the national median (and often even higher than the salaries of the city commissioners who oversee the agencies), according to a recent study by City Councilman Tom Ognibene. The city's nonprofits operate like fortresses, Ognibene observes, denying the public legally required access to their financial data. Their financial statements, he says, are so shoddy and incomplete that they would trigger an IRS audit in an instant if they came from the private sector.

Whole neighborhoods depend on the government money the nonprofits attract. Stand on the corner of Fulton and Nostrand Avenues in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant section, and you stand in the principality of the decrepit Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, one of the Ford Foundation's opening salvos in the War on Poverty. This community development corporation rents out grossly overpriced, ramshackle office space to a host of government agencies and government-funded private agencies. Within a stone's throw, you can visit the Protestant Board of Guardians, Covenant House, the Brooklyn Bureau of Community Services, the Bedford-Stuyvesant Mental Health Center, and numerous small child-welfare and foster-care agencies. Walk a few blocks down Fulton Avenue, and you enter the principality of the Vannguard Urban Improvement Association, landlord to an equally large portfolio of government agencies and eponymous creation of social service kingpin Assemblyman Al Vann, chair of the Assembly's Committee on Children and Families from 1981 to 1992. Justifying his preference for social services rather than business development, Vann recently told *City Limits:* "The money needs to flow into our community. . . . We have to use the political power to impact on this economic system"—the same tired, anti-business, government-is-the-solution rhetoric that helped bring down a once-thriving borough.

It is impossible to exaggerate just how ineffectual the majority of the social service agencies are. Truly eye-opening are the results of a 1995 request from the city to contractors in four areas —HIV prevention, school health clinics, home care for the elderly, and Head Start—to set performance targets for themselves and to measure their success in meeting them. Many agencies found the concept of a measurable outcome baffling; others set goals so low and performed so poorly that they ought to have been ashamed to rebid for city funding.

The anti-HIV outreach group, Sub-Sahara AIDS Rescue, for example, serves 3,000 mostly male Africans in Brooklyn, many of whom live eight to a household and hire a communal prostitute for the weekends. The group's goal: to refer 200 customers during the year for services and counseling with other agencies. In the first quarter it had a grand total of five customers. After hustling in the next quarter, it referred 87 to unspecified "HIV services." (Of course, a referral to services is hardly a true performance target, since the question remains: what did the services accomplish, assuming the "client" even showed up?) Another HIV group, the Valley, serves 150 young people in Manhattan who are in trouble with the law and "who exhibit poor self-esteem." Its goal was to persuade 12 to accept HIV testing. After six months, five "customers" had been tested, a measly 4 percent of the sample. Project Return runs a "crisis intervention program" in Central Harlem to "engage" 3,000 black and Latina women who are drug users, prostitutes, or homeless. Its goal was to place 35 women in drug treatment—barely over 1

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percent of the client base. Note well: completion of treatment was not an agency goal. After six months, 11 women had been placed. The agency did not disclose the outcome of those placements.

Just as ineffectual were the Head Start programs. The Children's Aid Society conducts "group discussions, brainstorming, and role playing" for welfare mothers in the Frederick Douglass housing projects. It planned that five of 20 women would "report a positive change in their coping skills," whatever that means. Only two did. Another program hoped that three of 23 Dominican single mothers would respond to questions in English and three would go back to school. Results? Nada.

However ludicrous, these efforts represent the most focused attention to outcomes that the city's service agencies have attempted in recent memory. Ordinarily, the agencies' accomplishments are even fuzzier. Part of the reason is that staff competence is often just a few steps ahead of their clients'. The youth leader in a Bed-Stuy family services agency, for example, can't write English. Her description of a teen "rap" group ran as follows: "LET'S TALK' group will discuss issues that are of concern to young people, and there communities. All topics discussed expands their knowledge on current events topics. As will as help develop identity, and interact with other teenagers their age and of other ethnic background."

However high on good intentions, her after-school youth program appeared to the casual visitor extremely low on organization or standards. One day last October, four teens lolled in front of computers playing video games while a tall 18-year-old looked on. The 18-year-old admitted that he was unable to boot up a computer, though both the youth center and his school offer computer instruction. (Throughout the city, "computer instruction" seems to result primarily in video game proficiency.) The other 15 or so kids had not shown up. The radio was blaring pop music. Nothing else happened.

Recklessness, however, is not the greatest flaw of the social service industry; moral agnosticism is. Most social service providers treat poverty exclusively as an economic condition rather than a moral one. Triple the welfare grant, or create more high-paying jobs, and voilà, we will have solved poverty. This is a gross, though seductive, lie. More than money, the long-term poor need values and self-discipline. They'll rarely get these tools for self-betterment from their city-funded social worker, however. I asked Deborah Rubian, preventive services director at Talbot Perkins, a private foster-care agency, if she talks about values with her clients—parents suspected of abusing or neglecting their children. Rubian was speechless. "I don't know how to answer. If [a parent] comes into the Administration for Children's Services [the city's child welfare watchdog], the system has already made a value judgment. ACS is a punitive system." Like most foster-care advocates, Rubian sees the potentially or actually abusing parent as no less a victim than the abused child. "People have to look at class issues," she retorted. "It's hard to have a discussion of morals unless you include class and gender." Rubian believes in sharing her identity-based apologetics with her clients: "When you give people information about class and gender, they eat it up." No wonder: for it means they can blame the system, rather than their own behavior, for their troubles.

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The one value that the social service advocates hold dear? Self-esteem. Sister Mary Nerny runs a counseling program for women who have killed their abusive partners or who have allegedly been forced to commit a crime by those abusers. The program focuses on "practical concerns," except for what Sister Mary calls the "first value, really—how they value themselves." Murderers and felons might seem to need to learn how to value others, as well, but not in New York.

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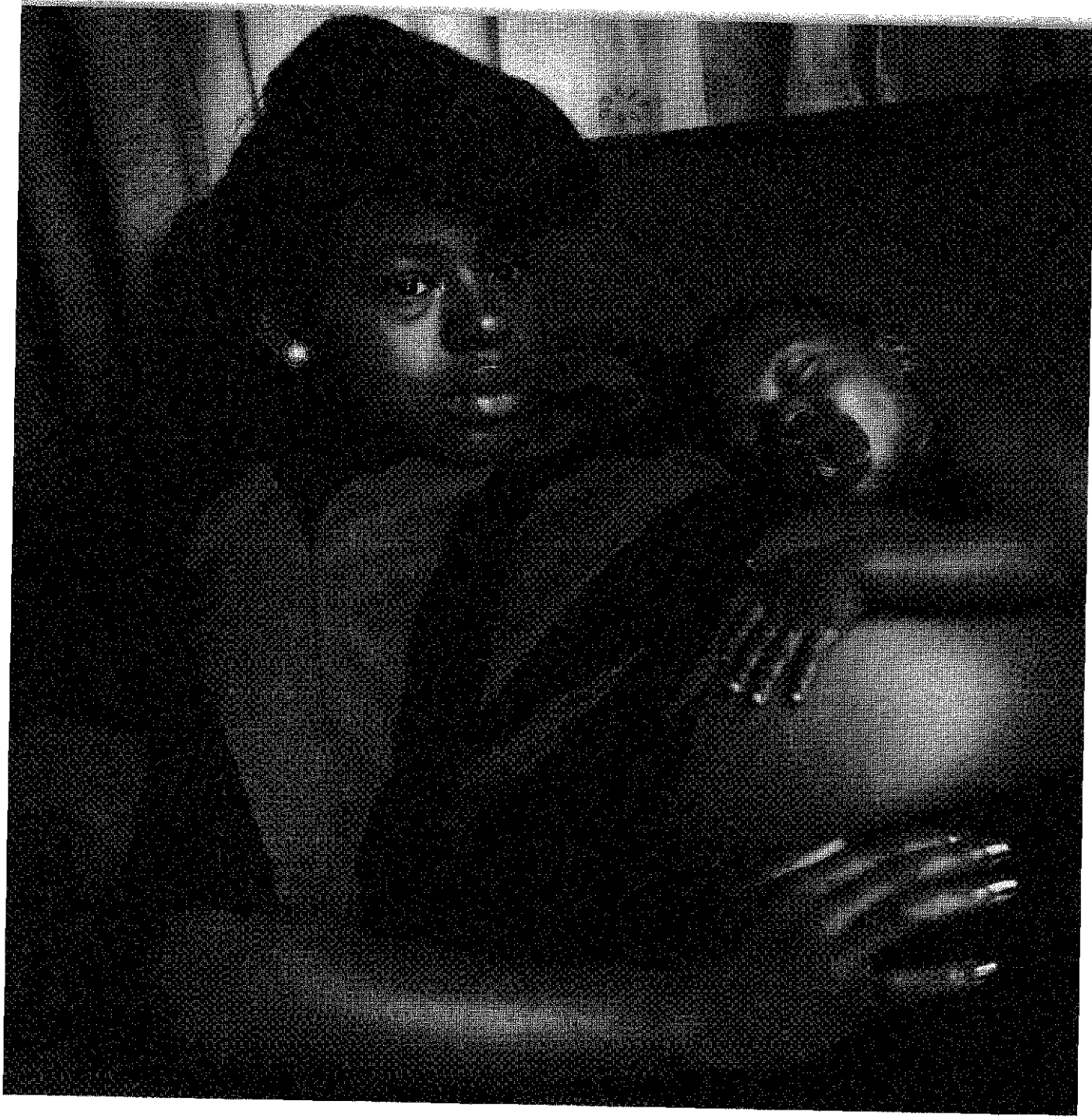

Given the reluctance of many nonprofits to teach personal responsibility, it is no surprise that some are on the warpath against the city's workfare program. Making people work for welfare benefits is "more like slave labor," says Sister Mary, speaking for many service providers on the city's payroll but opposed to its official policy.

New York's situation, then, is this: for all the billions that it spends on social services, it has literally no idea what it gains thereby. Some agencies may perform efficiently, but the city has few means of distinguishing the good from the bad. (To be fair, the city's own agencies are not necessarily more effective than its private, nonprofit contractors. I asked an employee in a clientless New York City Housing Authority job-training program what she did all day, and got the unapologetic response: "Nothing.") Many of those social programs bear the imprint of the advocates

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who fought for them: they seek to wring maximum benefits from government while making no demands on their clients. And though the city enjoys a budget surplus now, these expensive programs loom large in its multi-billion-dollar structural deficit.

Both financial and policy considerations argue for rethinking the city's social service efforts. City Hall should reevaluate all its programs according to the core values of individual responsibility and public accountability: bad behavior should never be rewarded, and the public interest, not some advocate's agenda, should govern how taxpayer dollars are spent. Then, the city should ruthlessly enforce performance goals.

In emphasizing individual responsibility, the city should establish a single principle of reciprocity throughout its benefit programs. Residents of homeless shelters should perform workfare, for example, and in the area of welfare, the city should begin strictly enforcing the school attendance rules for teen mothers. In all areas, the city should eradicate subsidies for irresponsibility. For example, the Administration for Children's Services should not be providing housecleaners, at a cost of $25.9 million in 1997, to mothers who beat or neglect their children. Though federal money helps pay for such services, the city should turn it down. Likewise, the city should stop paying for parenting classes for child abusers. It is not the government's role to try to reform such bad character; the burden should be on the parent, both financially and legally, to prove future fitness.

In addition to their moral dubiousness, court-ordered, city-subsidized parenting classes are unlikely to work. At the graduation ceremonies last October for a parenting class at Family Dynamics, a preventive services agency in Bedford-Stuyvesant, one-quarter of the "graduates" didn't show; another third were extremely late. A large-boned, broad woman with few teeth and wild dreadlocks was on her second tour through the parenting curriculum; many mothers make many more. Her first run-in with child welfare was around 1988, when she had two kids; in 1990, on her third child, she was charged with scalding and beating her children. Two more kids followed, and all five are now in foster care for neglect. Taxpayers should be free of her; but in one of the welfare system's greatest scandals, a recent New York State law says that, as long as a plan for reuniting parent and child exists, parents can keep getting their welfare checks, even while the children whose welfare is at issue are in foster care, at a hefty additional cost to the taxpayers.

The most powerful curb the mayor should put on the social service industry, however, is performance contracting. Only if an agency meets clearly defined goals should it get paid; it can wallow in class and gender injustice if it likes, but at its own expense. Yet the principle of performance contracting is easier to state than to implement.

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Since the social services industry has operated with so little accountability for so long, no one really knows what a reasonable goal in many fields is. In its own performance experiments, the city has mostly allowed nonprofits to define their own laughably low goals, or has used performance contracting only to reward agencies, not to penalize them. (One notable exception is the city's recent performance initiative for welfare-to-work job placement.) Clearly, getting 4 percent of a client population to take a desired action is not a good bargain by anyone's calculation. The city itself should establish more ambitious targets in its contracts and then make those targets the basis for compensation. Agency heads could use the "reasonable taxpayer" test for setting performance goals. Would the reasonable taxpayer, for example, be pleased with the existing 20 percent job-placement goal for welfare job clubs? Most likely not. If, after setting higher tar-

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gets, the city finds that few agencies are eligible for contract renewal, so be it.

It may be that human services or charity work, faced with the difficult task of changing human motivation, has always had, and will always have, such a low success rate. In that case, a good argument exists for getting government out of the area entirely. Public officials have an obligation to use public funds for things that can actually be accomplished. If government does not have the tools to improve individual character, it should stop trying.

Where possible, the city should introduce competition into social services. In day care, for instance, the city should give mothers vouchers and let them choose their own provider—including, if they desire, a church- or synagogue-run nursery.

A final principle should govern the city's programmatic choices: fund opportunity for all, not rehabilitation for some. Faced with a choice between funding a sports or music program for children and drug treatment for addicts, the city should opt for the sports or music program, once integral parts of a child's formation. The drug addict made himself needy, whereas all children need education. America's great philanthropists and urban visionaries created enduring institutions that individuals could use for their own betterment—great libraries, museums, public parks, and universities. Cities are themselves such an institution; they squander their capital in catering to special-interest victim groups instead of the common good.

One program whose reform would send the right fiscal and policy messages loud and clear is the kinship foster-care program of the city's massively troubled foster-care system. Kinship foster care exemplifies just about everything that can go wrong with advocate-driven social services. No longer simply a means of protecting children, it has been fatally reconfigured as an anti-poverty program. Regular foster care places an abused or neglected child with an unrelated foster family, paid a monthly fee for the child's upkeep. In kinship foster care, the child moves in with a relative, who receives foster payments just as if she were unrelated to the child. Those payments happen to be many times higher than AFDC or TANF payments—in 1994, $547 a month for a 16-year-old child, compared with, say, the extra $37 that a child could bring into a welfare family of five.

The stated purpose of the program is to ease the child's difficulties by placing him within his own extended family. But note that the program keeps foster-care payments within the family as well. Economically, a single-parent family with three children on welfare is far better off with the children in foster care with their grandmother than it is with the children at home.

And these perverse economic incentives have taken over the program. Advocates see kinship foster care as a way to pump more government dollars into poor families. The child's well-being, as usual, takes second place. According to city officials, Legal Aid lawyers promote kinship foster care not as a temporary way station but in effect as a desirable, permanent status. Poverty attorneys counsel relatives who are willing to take their nephews or grandchildren for free to enter the more complicated, but far more lucrative, kinship foster-care program instead. By monetizing family obligation, kinship foster care is destroying the black extended family just as surely as welfare destroyed the nuclear family, former Human Resources Commissioner William Grinker has remarked.

Once a child is in kinship care, financial considerations keep him there, even though foster care is supposed to be as short-term as possible. In a current, sadly typical, case, the grandmother and drug-abusing mother live in the same building. The grandmother has her daughter's two children, for which she is getting $1,200 a month, plus clothing, medical, and transportation allowances. The grandmother lets her daughter visit her children at will and in all likelihood shares the kinship payments with her. Meanwhile, the drug-abusing mother has the right to receive her welfare check, even though her children no longer live in her home, because social workers have come up with a plan for the children's eventual

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reunification with her. If the grandmother either adopts the children or discharges them back to the mother's care—the ostensible goals of the foster-care system—the extended household loses an extra $14,400 a year in cash plus in-kind benefits. Not surprisingly, the grandmother is dragging her feet about discharging the children, and the mother has no incentive to get off drugs to get her children back. Moreover, though the grandmother may be a fine foster parent, the fact that she has raised a drug-abusing and child-neglecting daughter is reason for the city to presume her a suspect candidate for foster care until she proves otherwise.

Disgruntled city officials tell of families who have made kinship care into a cottage industry: the mother keeps having children, who, bundled with foster payments, go right to the grandmother. Private child-care workers complain that many kinship foster parents participate only for the money and are irresponsible caretakers. Indeed, a city-sponsored study revealed that only 58 percent of children in kinship homes attend school "nearly always."

Kinship foster care now drives the entire foster system. Kinship placements accounted for 72 percent of the dramatic rise in the foster caseload in the state (overwhelmingly concentrated in New York City) between 1986 and 1991, according to the Citizens Budget Commission. Kinship foster care also explains the enormous disparity in foster-care spending between New York State and the rest of the country—five times higher as a share of personal income.

The mayor should direct officials to end their current frantic search for relatives to nominate as kinship foster parents. Elsewhere in the state, county social service commissioners manage to keep children placed with relatives out of foster care, despite state law and regulations that promote kinship foster care. If a relative comes forward, the city should subject her to the same scrutiny as it would an unrelated foster parent. It should think carefully before certifying her, or anyone else, as a foster parent if she's on welfare, since the fact that she can't support her own children suggests that she may not be ready for more. The city should disqualify anyone investigated for abuse or neglect in the past. It should only place a child in a foster care relationship with a relative if the relative agrees to begin guardianship proceedings within a year. Ideally, the city would seek to change the rule requiring kinship-rate payments for relatives, thus removing the perverse financial incentives. Setting kinship foster rates at AFDC rates would also save $53 million a year.

The only thing we know for sure about New York City's vast social service effort is that it is a crippling burden on the local economy. Any other consequence—such as improving the lot of the poor—remains speculative. Given the certain negative effects of the city's disproportionate welfare spending and the uncertain positive effects, the burden henceforward should be on the advocates of any given program to prove its benefits. In the meantime, New York should return—and quickly—to its core function: providing opportunity for all through strong schools, a vibrant economy, and an efficient infrastructure.

The drug-abusing mother has the right to receive her welfare check, even though her children no longer live in her home.

As important as any specific reform, however, is the moral power of the mayoralty. For decades, New York's mayors have squandered that power with the tired plea: Washington, send money! Mayor Giuliani, however, has amassed enough political capital to try something radically new: speaking the truth about urban problems. If he were to speak honestly about illegitimacy, if he were to detail the ever-widening consequences of family breakdown, and if the city saw even a partial brake on the number of children born out of wedlock, Mayor Giuliani would leave an unparalleled legacy to the city and the country.

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Peter Reinharz

The Crime War's Next Battles

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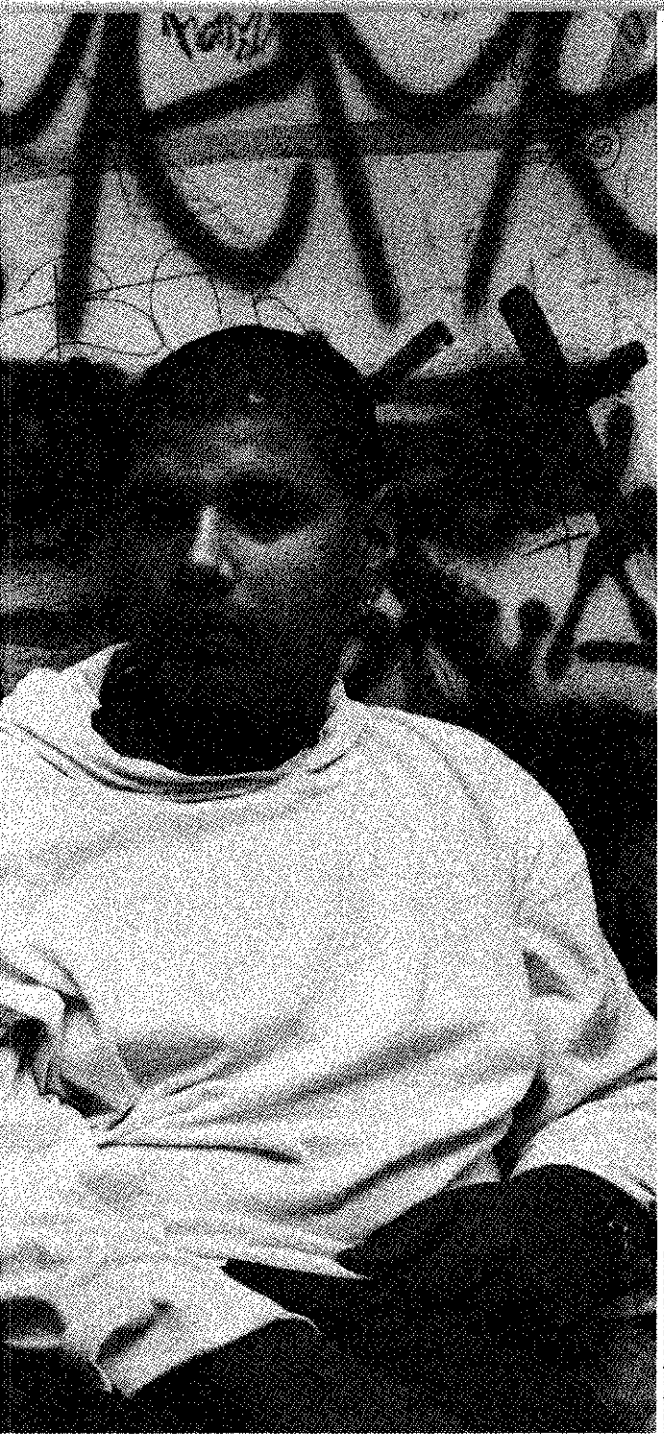

BRUCE DAVIDSON/MAGNUM

Completing the mayor's war on crime means tackling guns, school crime, and a flare-up of subway robberies. Here's how to do it.

Nothing has inspired more confidence among New Yorkers than the reduction in crime since 1993, an extraordinary accomplishment that dwarfs drops in other large cities and, everyone agrees, results from the innovative policing and management strategies of the Giuliani administration and from its unwavering political will. For violent crimes, New York City ranked 157th of cities with populations over 100,000 in 1996—well below Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., and even way below Orlando and San Francisco. Gotham's murder rate ranked 68th among the nation's largest cities in 1996, and as *City Journal* goes to press, the best guess is that 1997's murders will total around 750, bringing the murder rate down to where it stood in the mid-1950s, a goal undreamed of five years ago, when the annual body count soared to around 2,300. New Yorkers once again feel safe, not only in their own neighborhoods but even in sections of the city that many deemed hopeless, like the Brooklyn waterfront area now lined with new art galleries and nicknamed Dumbo. Gothamites also no longer feel that they live on top of a volcano: no New Yorker today worries that riots like those that raged in Los Angeles in 1992 could happen in New York on Rudy Giuliani's watch.

Attacking crime has paid big dividends to New York, kindling a new vitality throughout the city. Tourism is up, and for the first time in this century more people across America want to relocate to New York than to any other metropolitan area, according to a recent Gallup poll. Businesses are reaping big savings from the expulsion of the mob from the garbage-hauling business. More important, for the first time in years, New Yorkers feel optimistic about their town's future. Though that's partly due to the Wall Street boom, remember that even during the eighties' bull market, people expressed pessimism about the city's future. What makes the crucial difference, it seems, is the order and safety the first Giuliani administration has restored.

I watched this accomplishment unfold from my front yard, on the border between Queens and Nassau Counties. On my side—the Queens side—is a vest-pocket park that gives the neighborhood

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much of its charm. But during the early nineties, things often turned ugly at night: young people flocked to the park and got drunk and riotous. In those days, the police responded glacially to late-night calls to make arrests or issue summonses. The bulk of these offenders were juveniles, they told a home-owners' meeting with a shrug, and nothing could be done. When I replied that I was in charge of juvenile prosecutions for the city and that something could be done, the officers merely dug into their bag of excuses to support their continuing inaction. One friend, a community affairs officer from a precinct outside Queens, told me that the cops' hands were tied and that if I wanted to get some sleep I should move.

At the time, cops told me that City Hall instructed them to concentrate on big crimes and ignore many quality-of-life crimes, because they are just part of city life. Equally important, City Hall didn't want to overburden the budget with a massive jail population. Recalls one NYPD veteran: "A few years ago, if you stopped a drunk, they'd stick you on a fixed post for punishment."

Nothing could improve the lives of the law-abiding citizens of inner-city neighborhoods more dramatically than a reduction of violent crime.

In those days, the former administration put into effect a new plan that sounded great. Dubbed "community policing," it put cops on an old-fashioned neighborhood beat, where, the theory went, they'd be highly visible and would know all the residents, merchants, and troublemakers in the neighborhood. But alas, the new community policing turned out to be mostly about police watching crime. The troublemakers in virtually every corner of the city soon learned that neighborhood cops were not routinely arresting for low-level crime, and community policing became an invitation to vagrancy and public disorder.

My neighbors eventually gave up on New York's finest. We learned that the way to deal with our problem was to call our friends down the block in Nassau County and ask them to call 911. The appearance of the Nassau County cops, invading Queens to get to the little park, put a swift end to the evening's mayhem. It didn't take much: only an air of authority and swagger as the suburban officers menacingly tapped their nightsticks and communicated that they would not countenance incivility.

But by the first spring of the Giuliani administration, the issue of a crime-plagued park had evaporated, without further help from across the county line. A few summonses, a few arrests, and drunken mobs became a thing of the past.

This seems like a small thing, but it goes to the heart of Giuliani-era police strategy. By tackling low-level crimes like drunken rowdiness in our park, or like fare beating, graffiti, and extortion by squeegee, New York's police force reduced the overall crime rates for violent offenses. By enforcing the law on every corner, the police department took back the authority it had all but lost in the preceding years. The cops who did it were largely the same men and women who had patrolled the city five to seven years ago, but now they knew that the department's leaders would support them when they challenged the city's criminals every day. After all, precinct and unit commanders heard weekly from top police brass at their now world-famous Compstat (Computerized Statistics) meetings that they were responsible for getting criminals off the streets and making sure that reported crime kept going down. In turn, rank-and-file cops were to make clear that they were on the watch and in charge—and criminals got the message.

What should the mayor do in his second term to build on his extraordinary success so far? First, he should hold steadfastly to the policing policies that have worked so well. In the wake of some recent incidents of police brutality, critics have tried to discredit the strategy, charging that it incites police to abuse their powers. Not at all. True, just as occasional instances of corruption turn up in all parts of government, renegade cops sometimes cross the line and join the ranks of

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marauding thugs. But the department has strengthened its already intense efforts to root out bad cops by using the Compstat meetings to hold commanders responsible for the conduct of the officers under their command as well as for crime reductions in their precincts. The vast majority of cops are appalled at the actions of their rogue colleagues. Proud to have put the brakes on New York's crime wave, several officers expressed concern to me that, in the wake of one particularly gruesome act of police brutality, their commanders may become too tentative about letting them challenge criminals and control the streets. The right way to deal with officers who assault citizens under the color of police authority is to put them in jail, like any other part of the city's criminal population—not to change the successful strategy of the whole department.

Mayor Giuliani has a ready answer to critics who, in the name of civil liberty, attack the new policing as discriminatory against minorities—as a war on the inner city. Inner-city communities are precisely the ones that can least afford an increase in violent crime rates. In a national survey, the Bureau of Justice Statistics found black households three times as likely as white households to cite neighborhood crime as a major concern in their lives. Inner-city black households named crime as a concern more often than any other issue, while white households never mentioned crime as a dominant factor in everyday life. Nothing could improve the lives of the law-abiding citizens of inner-city neighborhoods more dramatically than a reduction of violent crime that makes them so constantly apprehensive. And indeed, from 1993 to 1997 crime fell by 39 percent in central Harlem, 42 percent in East New York, and 45 percent in the South Bronx.

Second, one of the few places where crime fell much less than in the rest of the city during the last four years was the school system, and that troubling fact should make the mayor press all the harder for something he proposed during his first term: putting the Board of Education's Office of School Safety under police department control. Uniformed school safety officers, who man the school metal detectors, patrol hallways, break up fights, and even arrest students, play a police-like role and ought to come under police supervision—to be, officially, cops. The NYPD can give them much better training in law-enforcement techniques than they currently receive, provide the intense pre-hiring background checks they ought to undergo, and, through its internal discipline units, offer the kind of oversight of their conduct that they need. A police department commander is more likely to ensure better day-to-day performance and discipline than a principal.

Scholars of crime warn of a renewed crime wave in the next millennium as a new breed of "superpredators" enters adolescence. The jump may start as early as 1999, when the first crack babies—those born addicted to crack cocaine—turn 13, the age at which violent crime escalates dramatically among young males. If the schools really are the first line of socialization for many of New York's children, we need to make sure they do the job effectively. Having school safety officers who can keep schools safe and orderly becomes more important than ever—for all of us.

The Board of Education and the chancellor have opposed this idea. They want school principals to retain ultimate control. Trouble is, principals sometimes impede school safety rather than facilitate it. Seeking to improve crime statistics in their schools, they will tell safety officers not to file cases or incident reports. Over the years, I have conducted countless training forums with school safety officers. During these sessions, officers repeatedly told me of principals who block their efforts to ready a case for prosecution—or even for an initial referral to the prosecutor's office—out of a wish to limit the number of crimes reported at their schools. One officer told me about a principal who "administratively handled" a gun in a school; another recalled a principal who let a student out the school's back door when police arrived to arrest him on a felony warrant. Other officers have said that as long as the principal remains in charge of law enforcement within a school, they cannot seek help from outside police agencies—even when the principal is covering up crime. In this respect, compare the state of affairs in many Texas school districts, where police officers have complete authority for school safety, can go to students'

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homes to investigate allegations of crime or neglect, and can call in other police or prosecutors for help.

In their defense, the Board of Ed and the chancellor point to a 17 percent drop in serious offenses in the schools between 1995 and 1997. But this statistic crumbles on inspection, since the Board of Ed reclassified many crimes from the serious into the non-serious category, producing a 10 percent *increase* in non-serious cases. For example, some infractions formerly labeled "assaults" now fall into the non-serious "harassment" category, which rose a troubling 19 percent in the high schools and an alarming 38 percent in the elementary schools over the two previous academic years.

Even if school crime really has fallen, the drop hardly compares with the city's overall crime decrease. Last year, as burglary fell 16.7 percent in the city, for instance, burglaries jumped 34 percent in the high schools and a whopping 58 percent in the elementary schools. In the last two years, possession of controlled substances increased 45 percent in the city's elementary schools—but even as the city begins the biggest antidrug initiative in its history, schoolchildren most at risk of drug abuse will not benefit fully, because their schools will have prevented meaningful participation.

Several years ago, when a former school safety director agreed to let school safety officers arrest felons in school when they failed to appear in court, then-chancellor Ramon Cortines balked. Schools, his office opined, should be places where kids feel safe, including safe from arrest. It took a while for the chancellor to grasp that students wanted on felony warrants might understandably make the majority of the student population feel distinctly unsafe.

Students grasp this point instantly. They worry constantly about safety in school, where they see students smoking marijuana without interference from nearby teachers, or hear rumors of firearms brought into the school undetected by lax security. They speak of being afraid to use the school bathrooms for fear of thugs who might lurk there, and they force themselves to wait until they get home—a state of affairs unconducive to concentration on math or social studies. Despite efforts to get computers into classrooms, build more schools, and develop curricula of "inclusion," students will not learn effectively if they are more concerned about safety than schoolwork. And middle-class students of all races will continue fleeing Gotham's public schools for suburban safety. For the law-abiding majority of students, just as the cop on the subway leaves riders reassured, so too would police officers in schools create the same sense of order and security.

And with good reason. Under the police department's aegis, safety officers would share the NYPD's technology, its gang intelligence units, and its Compstat process. Student safety would no longer be transferred from one force to another as students cross the threshold from school to street. The best defense against a gang that is active both in schools and on the streets is a police agency operating across the divide.

Of course, educators, not cops, should handle normal student unruliness, and routine disciplinary concerns mustn't get confused with violations of the law. NYPD's oversight of the Office of School Safety must guarantee that the training of school safety officers leads them to react appropriately when kids are just being kids. School officials must remain in charge of routine internal discipline, but students will have to know that criminal behavior will invoke a law-enforcement response.

Third, the mayor ought to sharpen his strategy for stemming the flood of guns inundating New York. He should make suppression of gun trafficking and illegal handguns a priority, just as he has made narcotics enforcement a major initiative for the new term. Though New Yorkers feel much safer overall, they still fear that most dreaded of criminals: the conscienceless kid with a gun.

And they are right to do so. While most categories of crime have fallen dramatically, juvenile crime has abated only modestly. Juvenile robberies declined about 8 percent during 1996, but that small drop followed an increase of nearly 11 percent the year before. The overall increase from 1986 to 1996 was 155 percent. Lots of these are crimes with guns: the number of gun possession cases

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among kids under 16 rose more than 81 percent during that same decade. According to the FBI, the number of teens under 17 arrested for firearms-related murder jumped 158 percent from 1985 to 1994, and teenagers accounted for 23 percent of all the nation's weapons arrests in 1994. According to the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, kids with guns are such a large part of the crime problem that four out of every ten illegal guns used in a crime are taken from someone under 24 years of age. In fact, guns and kids are so linked that the office prosecuting juvenile crime in Manhattan had to purchase a safe six times larger than the old model to hold the arsenal seized from kids under 16 years of age.

On the other side of the barrel, the City Council found, in a compelling (albeit unscientific) recent survey, that 44 percent of all children interviewed knew someone who had been shot, and 37 percent knew someone killed by gunfire. Over 50 percent of the children questioned by the council reported gunshots while at home, and nearly one-third of the youths indicated that they knew where to purchase an illegal handgun.

Though New Yorkers feel much safer overall, they still fear that most dreaded of criminals: the conscienceless kid with a gun.

Police and federal ATF agents should work together to intercept the guns being brought into town as well as to arrest dealers in other states who participate in smuggling illegal handguns into New York. They should focus on hubs like the Port Authority Bus Terminal, where, police say, young "mules" get off buses every day from West Virginia, Florida, and other southern states with duffel bags filled with firearms that their bosses sell to criminals. Authorities might use dogs trained to sniff out traces of gunpowder residue, which factory test-firing leaves even on brand-new guns.

Federal law allows officers to search someone if he fits the profile authorities have developed of a gunrunner, but New York law, as defined by the state courts, does not. The city ought to work out an arrangement with federal prosecutors, as it has in the past with narcotics smuggling cases, that would allow NYPD officers to search people who fit the profile and process them through the federal courts if they are smuggling guns. The federal courts could also prosecute young gun mules, who face no more than 18 months of incarceration in a youth facility if convicted in the state's Family Court but could be incarcerated up to their 21st birthday if prosecuted under federal juvenile delinquency statutes.

Even though New York has tough sentencing laws, supposedly ensuring that every person convicted of possessing a loaded illegal firearm spends at least one year in jail, in practice New York City judges find mitigating circumstances and tiptoe around the mandatory minimum sentence in more than half the cases, often placing convicted gun felons on probation. Upstate judges, from counties supposedly hostile to gun control, give gun offenders much tougher sentences. As a senior ATF agent put it, in New York, the sentencing of those who possess illegal handguns is "still a joke." The mayor needs to look hard at the judges who mete out such soft sentences. He should charge his advisory commission on judicial appointments with investigating why courts find mitigating reasons more often than not in order to reject a law of the state. Judges who ignore the legislative requirement for one year in jail should pass strict scrutiny before being reappointed to the bench.

Fourth, in August and September, robbery and grand larceny in the subway took a nasty turn upward, and in fact for the first eight months of 1997 the number of subway grand larcenies jumped 13 percent over the same period the year before. To stop this upswing at once, the police need to take swift, decisive measures. Above all, they need to send decoy officers back underground.

The police commissioner's response—sending 300 more cops into the transit system and other areas

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hit by the rash of theft—is sensible but doesn't go far enough. The reassuring presence of uniformed officers on patrol is not the same as the mayor's traditional aggressive response to crime—which, like so much of the new urbanism, depends less on using more manpower than on using manpower more effectively. As a seasoned transit-police veteran notes: "Uniformed cops are not a deterrent for a good pickpocket. In fact, it tells the pickpockets right where the police are. Besides, the presence of lots of uniforms causes people to let down their guard, and some pickpockets are brazen enough to take advantage of this vulnerability."

What works much better are the famous decoy units the transit police used to deploy. These elite teams consisted of a decoy officer and a backup squad. The decoy, often wearing a breakaway chain around his neck or having a wallet in his coat, would feign drunkenness or sleep in the subway train or on the platform. Would-be thieves saw these easy targets, moved in for the crime, and instantly found themselves arrested by the backup team—about three criminals per tour. So successful was the operation that even the television news program *60 Minutes*, hardly known for its support of aggressive law enforcement, called it "most effective" in a glowing documentary it did on the unit.

Prosecutors love decoy cases because they are the legal profession's equivalent of a sure thing. Instead of civilian complainants, who eventually lose interest in coming to court, you have seasoned police witnesses, experienced at testifying. Fully 93 percent of all transit decoy arrests resulted in indictments, with conviction rates close to 100 percent. Best of all, the offenders the decoy squads arrested often had significant criminal histories: about 86 percent of them were recidivists.

The decoy unit strongly deterred subway crime. As a former squad member recalled: "Some guys were so afraid of the decoys that I overheard them picking out people they thought were decoy cops. Some of their picks were drunks just sleeping on the train or in the station. I heard guys say, 'That's a decoy; leave him alone.' " Surely the decoy unit's success, along with a perpetrator's fear that there might be decoys around him, is evidence that the program can be an effective tool in preventing crime over the next few years, not only in the transit system but also around the city's major shopping areas.

Finally, the city should consider completely decentralizing the probation department. Traditionally, probation officers require offenders to report regularly to their offices—usually located in or near the city's courthouses—to check on the parolee's compliance with sentencing conditions like drug testing, school attendance, or employment. But a new program, Operation Night Light (based on a Boston model), has moved some probation officers into police precincts and patrol cars to be closer to the parolees they supervise. This is a good start, but all supervising probation officers should be moved into storefront offices in the communities where their offenders reside. Instead of having probationers report downtown, it makes more sense to be close to them so that you can check on their whereabouts and their compliance more regularly. A probationer caught strolling around his neighborhood when he is supposed to be working may have some explaining to do.

The decentralization of probation supervision would complement quality community policing. By closely supervising offenders in a neighborhood, probation officers would add another level of security to streets the police already patrol. They would give the community an extra set of law-enforcement eyes—fixed on those who most need watching. When a probationer violates his sentence, the local officer will be on the scene to begin violation proceedings right away—including obtaining and executing a warrant for the probationer's arrest. In short, community-based probation would pull law-enforcement's net a little tighter across the whole city.

The fact is, Rudy Giuliani already has done extraordinary work in making New York one of the world's safest big cities. For that, he has earned admiration and respect from around the world. Let's hope that New Yorkers support him as he continues to do what we all thought impossible only a few years ago. •

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Toward a More Civil City

Jonathan Foreman

Innovative suggestions about fixing New York's then-ragged quality of life that Nathan Glazer, George Kelling, Peter Salins, and other urban thinkers outlined in a special issue of *City Journal* six years ago influenced one of the great successes of Mayor Giuliani's first term. *City Journal*'s authors argued that seemingly trivial irritations—from aggressive panhandling and lackadaisical garbage collection to public drinking, excessive noise, and *de facto* decriminalized drug selling—gave citizens the impression that things were falling apart and hinted, almost subliminally, that they were vulnerable to greater harms. "If the city doesn't care about one aspect of its citizens' lives," former *City Journal* editor Roger Starr wrote, "it probably doesn't care about others." The inevitable result was soaring crime. The devil-may-care atmosphere emboldened wrongdoers, and a pervasive demoralization made ordinary New Yorkers anxious, pessimistic, alienated from civic life, slow to go out into the city for pleasure, and quick to leave town for good.

In response, Mayor Giuliani directed the police to enforce aggressively the laws against low-level crimes—so-called quality-of-life offenses or what used to be called "victimless" crimes. It turned out that there really was a victim: the social order. The most visible, dramatic consequence of the mayor's new policy was the drop in crime to levels unknown since the early 1960s. Just as important, law-abiding New Yorkers began to feel that their city belonged to them once again. No longer did they have to watch thieves flaunting their invulnerability by selling their booty in full view of impotent passersby on Columbus Avenue or St. Mark's Place; no longer did every subway ride make them cringe under the aggressive mockery of graffiti-scrawled trains, proclaim-

When the mayor improved New York's quality of life, the city benefited hugely. Here are three easy ways to enhance it further.

THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY (4)

NEW YORK CITY.—

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DREN'S FRIEND"—A CHARACTER SKETCH AT A BROADWAY CROSSING, OPPOSITE A YOUNG LADIES' SCHOOL.—See Page 2[illegible].

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ing that lawlessness ruled; no longer did every walk on the sidewalk involve facing a gauntlet of deranged or drugged beggars; no longer did motorists have to submit to extortion by squeegee at every intersection. Central Park, Tompkins Square Park, Bryant Park all became pleasant and safe. Trade picked up at the city's restaurants and theaters. Hotels burst with tourists, formerly repelled by Gotham's crime and grime but now drawn by its newly restored metropolitan glamour. New Yorkers no longer believed that their city was poised on the brink of anarchy; instead, it had a future.

What can a second Giuliani administration do to improve the city's quality of life further? It can make New York a more civil place. Civility sounds old-fashioned, calling to mind Victorian gentlemen tipping their hats, and the word is alarming to those who believe bourgeois values are a prison from which we have recently, and thankfully, escaped. Indeed, for three decades a culture war has raged against bourgeois civility, under attack from moral relativism and multiculturalism, from the idea that people should be "authentic" rather than conventional, from the growing primacy of rights over duties, and from the fractiousness of identity politics. But civility is the preeminent urban virtue: both "civility" and "citizen" derive from the same Latin word for "city." Civility means behaving in a non-aggressive, mutually forbearing way toward your fellow citizens. Since cities draw together large numbers of strangers in a small area, civility is the mutually respectful behavior required of all if urban life is not to become disordered and dangerous, as it did over the last three decades.

The mayor should focus on three main civility-enhancing strategies. First, two large classes of the public incivilities that infuriate New Yorkers—dangerously inconsiderate driving and excessive noise—are in fact illegal, and the mayor should push the police to enforce existing traffic and noise laws seriously. This is an extension of his first term's quality-of-life strategy of enforcing already-existing but largely disused laws. Just as taking minor crimes seriously sent the message that the authorities really were in control, so too will increased police attention to cars with ear-pounding sound systems. Stopping motorists from skidding around corners and cutting off pedestrians in crosswalks will send an equally salutary message. Right now, the fact that you can get away with me-first, in-your-face behavior that isn't just thuggish and inconsiderate but plainly illegal encourages people to let loose their thuggish but legal impulses, if only in retaliation. Enforcement would underline the principle that society has standards for your behavior toward fellow citizens.

Second, the mayor should demand civil behavior from all city employees, who should be models of right conduct for the public. If the representatives of public order show no respect, then why should anyone else? Third, schools should teach the rules of good behavior, as they did in the recent past. Contrary to the romantic ideology of the day, children are not born knowing all moral truths intuitively.

Now that New York has the lowest violent crime rate of any major American city, residents are less afraid of being mugged and more afraid that they or their children will get run down crossing the street. They feel under constant assault from motorists who run red lights, cut them off, or honk at them in crosswalks. They know that they have to walk defensively, because the near misses they experience every day sometimes turn into something really dangerous. Motor vehicles kill 250 pedestrians in New York annually and put a startling 13,500 more in the hospital. By comparison, Tokyo, with 12 million people, averages around 150 pedestrian deaths annually.

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London, with a population close to New York's 7.5 million, experiences the same. Even Paris, noted for its crazy drivers, and with 2 million more people in its metropolitan area, has fewer than half New York's pedestrian deaths. Gotham's streets are the most dangerous for pedestrians in America, and lethal for children: every year, motor vehicles injure 3,500 kids between the ages of 5 and 14 in the city.

Enforcing the traffic laws would make New York's streets a lot less anarchic—and a lot safer. Traffic engineers point out that a decrease in vehicle speed from 40 to 30 miles per hour—the speed limit on New York City streets, though few motorists know it and very few signs proclaim it—increases the chance a pedestrian will survive being hit from 40 to 70 percent, so just slowing speeders down will lead to fewer lost lives. A city with fewer speeders will be less scary, not only to the elderly, to parents, and to out-of-towners but to all New Yorkers.

Oddly, the New York Police Department does not see traffic enforcement as a priority, despite the pedestrian casualties. Police issued a mere 650 summonses for failure to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks in 1996—fewer than two a day—

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despite the 70 percent of traffic fatalities that occur there. Police should punish crosswalk violations ruthlessly. Despite the regular speeding on city streets of the city's 2 million motorists—on Manhattan's upper Broadway, the Department of Transportation alarmingly discovered, vehicles regularly zoomed by at 50 miles per hour—90 percent of the city's 84,227 speeding tickets were for violations on the city's limited-access expressways, not its pedestrian-heavy main streets, though more pedestrians than motorists die in city accidents. The NYPD hands out only 44 speeding tickets a day on the five boroughs' local streets, and it should aggressively increase that number. As John Kaehny of Transportation Alternatives explains, "the police feel overwhelmed by the general lawlessness of the streets"—but their ticketing policy makes them complicit in the chaos.

New Yorkers must especially beware of the city's buses and taxis, which frequently operate with little concern for the law. Buses, in particular, terrify motorists and pedestrians. Bullying juggernauts of the road, they pull out from the curb without regard for oncoming traffic, plow through red lights—causing gridlock along with endangering lives—and straddle lanes with impunity. Such reckless driving may well stem from a sense of legal invulnerability: police almost never ticket bus drivers, who share unionized civil servant status with them—albeit under state, not city, jurisdiction. And municipal bus drivers who have injured or killed people in multiple accidents still ride the streets, for civil service rules make dismissing them next to impossible. But when bus drivers, as civil servants, flout the rules of the road, it sends exactly the wrong message—that the offi-

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cial representatives of society have contempt for the law. More reason, then, for the mayor to direct the police to enforce moving violations against them vigorously.

By contrast, the police shower taxi drivers with tickets, but not for bad driving—though taxis often careen through the streets as if traffic laws didn't exist, frightening pedestrians and passengers alike. Cabs killed 48 New Yorkers in 1994 and 1995, 70 percent of them pedestrians or bicyclists, and 5,000 taxi accidents occurred annually from 1988 through 1993. Yet most taxi citations are for ripped seats, parking illegally while the driver looks for a bathroom, or letting passengers get in at a bus stop. To take only one month as an example: of the 1,500 summonses police gave taxi drivers in April 1995, only 38 were for moving violations. If police would intensively penalize reckless taxi drivers now, they could ease up in the future, just as strict enforcement of the pooper-scooper law when it was introduced changed dog-owners' behavior permanently, even though enforcement has now greatly relaxed. If word got out that police no longer tolerated irresponsible taxi driving, taxi drivers would drive lawfully and civilly—and other motorists would get the message too. Instead, the NYPD's Traffic Control Division—which includes taxi enforcement—operates at half strength.

Bikes join the motorized forms of transportation in terrorizing pedestrians, even more so since a Chirping Chicken bicycle deliveryman recently killed an elderly man on the West Side. The NYPD has cracked down on bicycle road-crime, issuing around 10,000 summonses to cyclists for running red lights, driving on sidewalks, and other infractions in 1997—an almost 50 percent increase over 1996. Of the 100,000 bicyclists on the city's streets on any given day, the messengers and deliverymen, rather than the amateur riders, scare pedestrians the most, as they whiz the wrong way down a one-way street or plow onto the sidewalk with somebody's Chinese dinner. Not surprisingly, they cause most of the city's bike accidents, according to Transportation Alternatives. Commercial bikes should prominently display the employer's name, and new laws should hold companies liable for the reckless driving of their cyclists, who work under heavy pressure to be speedy. Police should register all bikes ridden on city streets.

More than half the callers to the police department's recently established, though under-publicized, quality-of-life hot line (888-677-LIFE) complained about excessive noise. Some of the noise is designed to be uncivil: boom-box cars, for example, or motorcycles and "muscle cars" with engines altered to make them sound as loud and raucous as possible. Mayor Giuliani moved in the right direction when he signed into law a noise pollution bill last November. The new law trebles the penalties for excessive noise, with a maximum individual fine reaching $2,100 for a third offense. Police can now slap a riotous nightclub with a $24,000 penalty. But police need to take excessive noise more seriously: early in 1997, only five of Queens's and Brooklyn's 39 precincts had meters to measure whether a noise was louder than the 80 decibels within 50 feet established by city ordinance as legal.

As much as graffiti or squeegee men, car alarms send the message that no one is in charge: they wail constantly, yet no one comes.

One major noise problem needs a new law to rein it in. The piercing wails of car alarms serve no purpose in most of the city. As much as graffiti or squeegee men, they send the message that no one is in charge: burglar alarms wail constantly, yet no one comes, as in some dystopian science-fiction movie. The chronic false alarms proclaim the intensely uncivil message several times a day (and night) that the peace and quiet of an entire neighborhood weighs as nothing compared to the anxieties of individuals about their property. Though in 1992 the City Council passed a law requiring car alarms to shut themselves off automatically after three minutes, it

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should go further and forbid entirely the use of car alarms within city limits and permit police to tow offending vehicles.

The city needs to look at its sirens, too, and ensure that they are the least bothersome possible and that they wail only during real emergencies. This holds true of the private ambulance services, whose noise-making remains unregulated. The mayor should also push to curtail street fairs sharply. They have turned into honky-tonk franchises. The mayor can also send a message that the city will no longer tolerate stores that blast music out front, except during Christmas and with a special permit.

If New York's 200,000 public employees were to behave more civilly, it would soften some of the harshness of city life and set an appropriate example to citizens. Of course, the incivility of public servants is often systemic and impersonal. I once tried to report a broken fire hydrant and called the Brooklyn telephone number suggested by my local police precinct, but no one ever picked up. The fire department gave me another number in the same area code. It too rang unanswered in some dusty Brooklyn office. My experience was not out of the ordinary. One survey found that the city Finance Department put callers on hold for 27 minutes on average, and a 1996 City Council survey found that, out of 173 complaint and question letters sent to 21 different city agencies, only 31 percent had received the courtesy of an answer within six weeks. Of 16 letters sent to 16 agencies offering to donate books and other items, none received a response.

Sadly, if Mayor Giuliani tried to emulate his predecessor, Mayor La Guardia, and fire uncivil civil servants, he'd have a tough time. La Guardia, the well-known anecdote runs, once dropped by incognito on a Lower East Side relief station, where insolent officials ignored him. Eventually, one of the city workers went up to the angry La Guardia, who shouted, "Take off your hat when you speak to a citizen!" striking the hat from the bureaucrat's head. La Guardia fired the civil servant on the spot. These days, regulations make it hard even to reprimand civil servants, much less fire them. Yet regulations do not tie the mayor's hands completely. Managers can fire city officials "for cause," though the process is arduous. The mayor could make it a potentially terminal offense for a civil servant to be rude to the public. Symbolically, such a gesture would show what city government expects when its employees deal with citizens. Nor are all city workers civil servants: some work part time or on contracts, so civil service regulations don't shield them from public dissatisfaction.

The city's managers can work at creating a culture of civility within their agencies. They should criticize boorish employees and lavish praise on those who treat the public as valued customers. Former Transportation Commissioner Ross Sandler recalls a senior transit executive who, whenever he rode the subway and heard a particularly friendly announcement, rewarded the driver with a star to wear on his uniform. The executive's gesture might seem corny today, but it expresses Management 101 common sense about human motivation. Wherever civil service rules permit, positive reinforcement could also take the more material form of promotions and pay increases.

Private businesses spent the last decade figuring out how to "meet and exceed customer expectations," as the management mantra has it, and businessmen have much to teach bureaucrats about how to be polite to taxpayers. The New York State Department of Motor Vehicles engaged Eastman Kodak to train DMV employees to see license applicants as customers rather than as irritating distractions. Kodak's program transformed DMV employee attitudes, with a happy result: the opening of the efficient, friendly, License X-press office on Manhattan's 34th Street. In 1993 the average waiting time in a DMV office was one hour. In 1996, after Kodak's creation of a new corporate culture in the department, the average wait shrank to only 11 minutes. Service companies offer other lessons from the private sphere that city agencies might borrow as well, including comment cards, 800 numbers, and monitored phone calls, to ensure satisfied customers.

The NYPD has already developed a civility program called "CPR"—"Courtesy, Professionalism, and

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Respect"—which, properly instituted, could be a model for city government. But CPR has yet to permeate the entire police department, and it currently expresses more of a hope than a reality. Police, because they are the literal embodiment of the civil order, need to exemplify civility more than any other city employees. As the community's monopolists of lawful force, they must hold themselves—and be held—to the highest standard. They must strike a delicate balance, making law-abiding citizens feel that the authority of society is on their side, while inspiring fear in criminals—all while the policeman is himself apprehensive. Cops must be civil even as they inspire respect, and sometimes fear—like FBI agents, for example, who address adult members of the public as "sir" or "ma'am," even when they are about to arrest them, without in the least compromising their reputation: their very self-restraint is intimidating. The police force must not appear to be the meanest, best-armed gang in town, but something higher than that. Sure, this is New York, not never-never land, but when cops are rude or vulgar or dismissive to law-abiding citizens, whether rich or poor, it's as if society has surrendered to thuggishness.

STREET INTRODUCTION.

CULVER PICTURES

Under Mayor Giuliani, the Taxi and Limousine Commission has also launched a commendable quality-of-life campaign to improve cab drivers' civility. The TLC banned burning incense in cabs and posted in all of them a "Passenger's Bill of Rights," which grants, among other things, a right to a quiet, radio-free ride. The city's yellow cab drivers now attend a mandatory four-hour course in customer relations at La Guardia Community College. The campaign has been a success, according to TLC Assistant Commissioner Allan Fromberg. Serious complaints are down by 20 percent. "We are getting more praise and pleased phone calls," Fromberg reports. "The business is getting more professionalized."

Any city effort to foster civility should have a public school component. Resistance would be fierce: New Yorkers who believe that school uniforms are fascistic doubtless will object that teaching children to give up their seats to elderly people or pregnant women on the bus embodies unacceptable cultural bias. Already, though, public school teachers instruct their charges about the wrongs of racism, pollution, and cruelty to animals. Surely, civility is somewhere on the modern moral continuum, even if up-to-date teachers do not avow it. Some schools teach "conflict resolution" to prevent fights—a last-ditch course in civility. Any civility course would in fact convey a basic principle essential to coexistence in the city: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Even teenagers in chaotic schools can understand that if everybody littered, held open subway doors or sprawled across two subway seats, talked in movie theaters, and blasted music, cities wouldn't work. Where schools have abandoned civics, as have all elementary schools in the New York system, the mayor should push them to reinstate it.

Teachers should teach civility as early as possible. With an increasing proportion of New York's school children arriving here from abroad, the need for such education grows more urgent, though many immigrant children come from societies that are far more civil than our own. Immigration's past success resulted in part from the schools' effectiveness in instructing newly arrived children in the norms of democratic urban life. New York will have fewer inflamed and resentful egos if all its citizens share a common ideal of civility.

Each of these initiatives is in the mayor's power to begin right away. Since he knows from the experience of his first term what valuable consequences flow from an enhanced quality of urban life, he'd be well advised to set them going now. •

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CUNY Could Be Great Again

Heather Mac Donald

The sixties turned the once-proud City University into a backwater of remediation and race politics. Time to change its course.

Anyone who doubts the destructive force of the 1960s should visit the City University of New York. Once a loose aggregate of elite colleges for the ambitious poor, it is now a bloated bureaucracy that jettisoned academic standards in the face of a flood of ill-prepared students. CUNY all but perfected the dismaying 1960s spectacle of educated adults cowering before know-nothing adolescents and outside agitators. In 1969 the CUNY administration, unwilling to defend the idea of higher education as a privilege earned by hard work, capitulated to violent student demands that the university be open to all. It radically lowered admission standards at the university's flagship liberal arts schools—City College, Hunter, Brooklyn College, and Queens College—and dropped them entirely for the community colleges. An academic tradition that had taken a century to create was torn down, in all but a few precious enclaves, in a few years.

Race politics altered the very shape of the university. Then-mayor John Lindsay, viewing higher education as just another tool of racial pacification, authorized a college construction campaign in minority neighborhoods. CUNY created such schools as Medgar Evers College and Hostos Community College as offerings to black and Puerto Rican nationalism. No one seriously argued that there was a huge pool of college-prepared students in those or other neighborhoods unable to find a place in a college. CUNY overbuilt—ten new campuses rose between 1963 and 1971—and set the stage for the fiscal crises that plague it to this day.

Faced with an onslaught of barely literate students, CUNY established tenured departments of remediation and new majors requiring virtually no knowledge of literature or history. Some of the new colleges and departments immediately set about propagating the racial ideology that gave them birth. Medgar Evers's education school, for example, recently provided a video for the city's elementary schools called "A Celebration of Blackness." It addressed the questions: "How did Africans build the pyramids? How did a people go from the pyramids to the projects? Why are some people racists? Why do you know more about Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and Martin Luther King Jr. than you do about Marcus Garvey, Elijah Muhammad, and Louis Farrakhan?"

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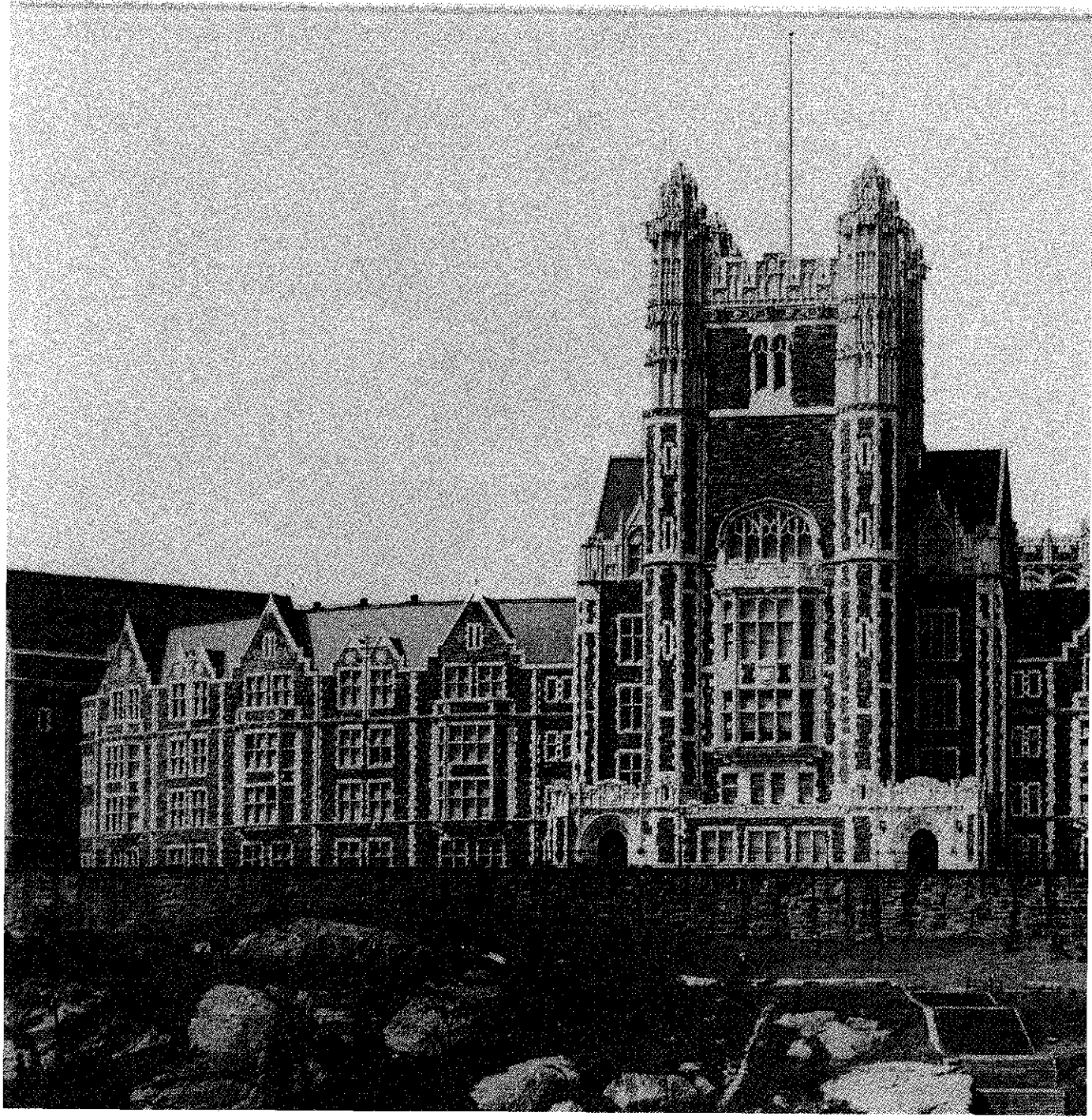

While some ill-prepared students succeeded in eventually learning to read and write, many others never emerged from the remedial trap. The academic excuse industry began arguing that it was unfair to hold back skill-deficient students from higher-level classes, and besides, who's really to say what constitutes a grammatical sentence? Soon, remedial professors were pushing students out of remedial courses, ready or not, and professors in college-level courses found themselves teaching students who could not grasp the arguments in a book or write a grammatical sentence or coherent paragraph. Academic standards crumbled. Those serious students who remained—and still remain—found themselves marooned.

But the greatest tragedy of open admissions occurred outside of CUNY, in the city's public schools. CUNY's decision to admit any breathing human being with a record of occasional high school attendance proved a deathblow to the city's schools. Already underperforming in the 1960s, the schools now had no incentive to strive,

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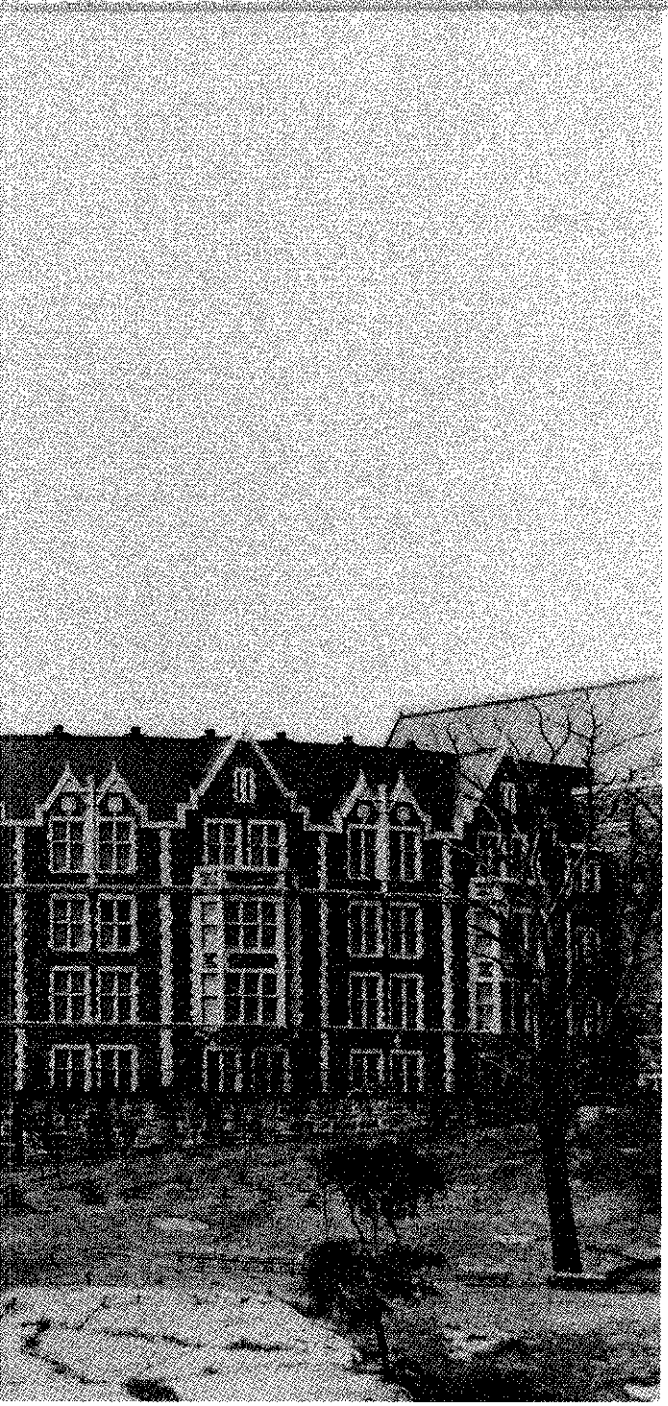

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

for CUNY guaranteed any level of mediocrity college admission. CUNY's entrance requirements—no skills or knowledge required—became the high schools' exit requirements.

CUNY now has the opportunity to correct its fatal miscalculation. Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Governor George Pataki today have a majority on CUNY's board of trustees. That majority has acknowledged that standards have dropped unconscionably at CUNY and has declared its intention to turn the university around. While the board has already announced some measures to do so, they are only a first step. The mayor and the governor should make sure that the trustees carry out the following agenda:

Remediation. The trustees have determined to limit remediation at the senior colleges to one year. Students with more serious skills problems must first attend a community college. While well-intentioned, this is too low a standard. Forty years ago it would have been inconceivable for a college freshman to show up on registration day and announce, "Oh, and by the way, you'll also have to teach me to read and write." If CUNY is ever to regain its status as an institution of higher learning whose degrees are valued, it must cease performing the role of elementary and secondary schools. More important, if New York's primary and secondary schools are ever to improve, there must be no safety-net institution that will try all over again to accomplish what the schools failed to do—with taxpayers footing the bill both times. CUNY's senior colleges, therefore, should offer no remedial courses.

Conventional wisdom among reformers redirects students with deficient skills to community colleges. But community colleges were never intended as *de facto* high schools. They are supposed to be technical training schools, on the one hand, and on the other, a less expensive alternative to a liberal arts college where students uncertain about their academic intentions can try out higher learning. Their mission should not include redoing elementary and high school education. CUNY's community colleges, therefore, should also close down their remedial departments and redirect the resources to improving their often antiquated technical programs.

The city should invite private tutoring companies, such as Kaplan Educational Centers, to offer remedial courses either in their own facilities or possibly at the community colleges. Most of CUNY's remedial departments have been overrun by theory-besotted post-Marxists, who see in bad grammar a courageous blow against the racist patriarchy and a mark of freethinking indi-

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viduality. (There are exceptions, of course—a few dedicated remedial teachers work overtime to maintain traditional standards of achievement.) As one City College remedial English teacher explained: the degree to which you correct a student's prose "depends on how much boredom you want to put up with, because hyper-correcting turns out dull people scared of error." Since such a view is rampant in the CUNY remedial faculty, the city would be better off turning to less ideological tutors.

Because ending the remedial safety net would radically change the rules under which students have operated, CUNY should eliminate remediation over a reasonable timetable, so that graduating seniors and juniors will not be left in the cold. In three or four years, however, all taxpayer-subsidized remediation should stop. Students who graduate high school without basic skills in the future will have to pay for their own remediation.

For one group of students, eliminating a remedial second chance will have no deterrent effect on elementary and high school incompetence: adults. They graduated under school chancellors long since disappeared. For them, the Board of Education should keep offering continuing education courses in basic skills.

Apologists for remediation argue that non-English-speaking students make up much of CUNY's current remedial burden. But students who need an interpreter to register for classes should not be registering in the first place, for they cannot yet benefit from an education in English. CUNY should turn Hostos Community College, the only allegedly bilingual college in the country (in reality, it is monolingual in Spanish), into an English-language immersion school. All foreign students would master English there (at their own expense—taxpayers should not pay to teach adult foreigners English) before enrolling in a regular college.

CUNY's most perverse betrayal of the ideal of higher education is the Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge (SEEK). Predating even open admissions, SEEK was CUNY's first capitulation to racial politics. Desperate to prove its racial good faith, CUNY took academically deficient minority students, thrust them into the senior colleges, for which they were otherwise ineligible, and showered them with additional tutoring and counseling (which is not to say that they actually showed up for their tutoring sessions). Notwithstanding the resources expended on SEEK, its graduation rate has historically been about 23 percent over eight years—in accordance with the iron law of remediation: the lower the student's skills, the less likely is he to succeed at remedying them. SEEK's *de facto* admissions policy—the worse your grades, the greater your chance of admission—is precisely the opposite of the work ethic that CUNY should promote. The trustees should close down SEEK and its community college counterpart, College Discovery, and devote the resources to CUNY's woefully underfunded honors programs.

Knowledge. Requiring that entering freshmen be able to read and write, while a radical idea at CUNY, is a far cry from traditional college entrance standards. To restore CUNY's former luster, the trustees must put knowledge back into the equation. The four flagship colleges—Brooklyn, City, Hunter, and Queens—should require that entering freshmen have taken a full array of college preparatory courses in high school. Such was the intent of the College Preparatory Initiative, a program started by former chancellor W. Ann Reynolds, but it has yet to be enforced. CUNY should implement it immediately, without loopholes. In addition, the senior colleges should start demanding creditable SAT scores. The newer four-year colleges and community colleges should also require academic preparation and SATs, though at a less demanding level.

The trustees must ensure that there are no hidden passages into the senior colleges that skirt the entrance requirements. Currently, the senior colleges must admit any student transferring from a community college with a degree. The board should abolish that provision. All students should meet the same standards.

Content. It is not enough to bring in well-prepared students to CUNY, if the university

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offers them nonsense once they've arrived. Like almost all universities nationally, CUNY has embraced the race-class-gender-and-sexuality posturing that passes for humanities scholarship today. While the Graduate Center offers colloquia in "Queer Globalization/Local Homosexualities," for example, Hunter requires its undergraduates to take courses in "women's studies and gender/sexual orientation" before graduating. It cannot be said enough: the current identity-based "scholarship" is a fraud. It deserves no deference from those outside academia, who too often suspend judgment when confronted with its mystifying jargon. That ever more arcane language refers to nothing outside itself; it is not a contribution to knowledge but, in its celebration of self-esteem and "empowerment," a betrayal of Western and Eastern scholarly traditions.

The current identity-based "scholarship" is a fraud. It deserves no deference from those outside academia.

The trustees should make it their mission to strengthen traditional scholarship and teaching at CUNY and eradicate the impostor subjects. They should mow down the costly multicultural institutes and initiatives that sprout up almost yearly at CUNY, and declare that the classic texts of Western culture are the basis of a CUNY education. Non-Western studies can greatly enrich that education, but they must be based in real historical scholarship, not in political score-settling.

Unfortunately, the trustees' appointment of Brooklyn College provost Christoph M. Kimmich as interim chancellor suggests that they do not grasp the stakes in the culture wars. Provost Kimmich led the effort last year to adulterate Brooklyn College's admirable core curriculum with required courses in such specious areas as community relations, local politics, and that darling of the lightweight everywhere: "communications."

Having made one error, the trustees should not repeat it. The future chancellor must express unswerving commitment to a core curriculum in history, literature, and science. The trustees should identify and nurture CUNY's remnants of solid learning. Queens College, for example, possesses a rich program in the arts and humanities, led by a respected music scholar. The trustees should reward with extra faculty lines those campuses that strengthen their traditional humanities offerings. In addition, they should try to revive those programs that once made a great contribution to the city's economy, such as City College's engineering program.

Performance measures. The trustees have laudably introduced performance measures into their future evaluation of CUNY. Schools that increase their graduation rates and cut administrative jobs will receive funding for additional faculty positions. Unfortunately, schools can manipulate their graduation rates by lowering academic standards. A better measure of performance might be a student achievement test in the core curricular areas, administered midway in a student's college career and graded on a university-wide basis. Students who failed any of the core areas would have to take further courses in those areas while proceeding with their majors. With such a requirement in place, CUNY could issue an ironclad guarantee of cultural literacy to parents and future employers.

Some parts of CUNY do not need further evaluation; existing evidence indicts them as irremediably rotten. CUNY's law school is the laughing-stock of the legal profession, with its rock-bottom bar pass rates and 1960s-style curriculum in political organizing and consciousness-raising. With New York City already teeming with law schools and lawyers, CUNY's law school should be closed down. Ditto Medgar Evers College and Hostos Community College, the latter to be reborn as an English-immersion institute. New York is racially polarized enough as it is; the last thing the city needs is colleges that specialize in ethnic separatism.

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CUNY's teacher education programs are also an embarrassment, lagging far behind New York State's other education schools in their teacher certification pass rates. Of New York's 46 education schools, only five had pass rates below 60 percent last year; four of those were at CUNY. Only 39 percent of Evers's teacher graduates passed the state licensing exam—small wonder, given the students' initial ignorance and the Afrocentric foolishness with which the school subsequently pumps them up. The leading Afrocentric quack, Asa Hilliard, for example, was the honored guest at an all-day conference in the "curriculum of inclusion" several years ago; City College race agitator Leonard Jeffries also led a student discussion group. Evers also devotes inordinate resources to special education and "paraprofessional" education. Because CUNY supplies a huge percentage of the city's teachers, the trustees have rightly made improving teacher education a central priority. Doing so will require focusing on basic knowledge and on how to maintain classroom discipline, rather than on nonsensical theories of post-colonial discourse and feminist epistemology.

Of New York's 46 education schools, only five had pass rates below 60 percent last year: four of those were at CUNY.

Bloated administration. CUNY's administration has swelled, even as its faculty ranks dwindle. In the president's office alone at Medgar Evers, for example, there is an executive assistant, a director of institutional advancement and public affairs, an executive director of institutional computing and system development, a coordinator of new initiatives, a special assistant, an affirmative action officer, and an executive secretary—not to mention the school's Office for Differently Abled Students. All of CUNY's student affairs deans, student counselors, diversity monitors, and assistants to the aide to the provost are a diversion from the classroom and from libraries. The trustees should require across-the-board cuts in administrative positions, targeting first the ubiquitous and wholly superfluous affirmative action departments that strangle every college. New York, and especially CUNY, has no diversity deficit. CUNY should renounce race- and gender-based hiring and admissions as an insult to the beneficiaries and an unfair penalty against those not favored by government's Byzantine race and gender classifications.

The university has created freestanding institutes, such as the sinecure Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean, at a blinding rate. They perform little, if any, teaching and serve mainly as a haven for faculty desperate to escape the tedium of lecturing to unprepared students. The trustees should put a moratorium on all such future institutes and declare that the primary mission of the university is to be a superb undergraduate teaching institution.

Community colleges. There is a critical shortage of traditional skilled tradesmen in the city, as well as workers in the new technologies. New York manufacturers are unable to find skilled machinists; high-tech firms likewise struggle to find advanced programmers. Employers complain that many of CUNY's community colleges, while well-intentioned, lag far behind the needs of industry. The community colleges should vigorously solicit and implement the advice of business leaders on how to function more effectively. CUNY could do much to stem the migration of business out of the city by guaranteeing a steady flow of technologically competent workers.

CUNY was once part of New York's traditional opportunity culture—it gave an enormous shot at success to young people with the drive to work hard. It did not pander to its students but held them to the same standards as more elite schools. The result was a great boost not only to them but also to New York's economy and culture. CUNY can be an opportunity school again by demanding excellence from its students. If it does, it can once more contribute to the city that supports it. •

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Let's Break Up the Big Cities

Howard Husock

Joining the five boroughs into one big metropolis 100 years ago was a big mistake. Here's why smaller is more efficient and more democratic.

It sounds like heresy to say so, but maybe the consolidation of the five boroughs into the City of New York, whose 100th anniversary we celebrate this month, wasn't such a good idea. The question is not just of theoretical interest. Today prominent urbanists are urging a new wave of consolidation, exhorting cities to merge with their suburbs to form region-wide metropolitan governments. But equally energetic advocates have mounted fierce political campaigns to make exactly the opposite view prevail—to form smaller, decentralized city governments for neighborhoods that secede from a larger whole. There are good reasons to believe that the secessionists are right. Indeed, even New York, notwithstanding all the anniversary hoopla, would work much better split into pieces.

The idea of metropolitan government—a benevolent, expert central administration for urban areas—has tempted efficiency-minded urban theorists for generations. Here, they've argued, is a way of bringing order to the chaos of central cities surrounded by a crazy quilt of independent suburbs. Though in the 1920s the movement saw metropolitanism as a recipe for improved city services and non-corrupt leadership, by the 1960s advocates added two more goals: redistribution of wealth, with affluent suburbs supporting public services in poorer inner cities, and environmental protection, with enlightened planners dictating the shape of future development, preventing "urban sprawl" and keeping "ticky-tacky" suburbs from devouring farmland.

Today's foremost champion of metropolitan government, David Rusk, onetime mayor of Albuquerque and self-described former civil rights and anti-poverty worker, travels the lecture circuit spreading the gospel of his 1993 book, *Cities Without Suburbs*. A unified metropolitan government, Rusk proclaims, can "profoundly transform the long-term outlook for failing central cities and help re-energize American society." Cities that annex their suburbs, Rusk claims, adding his own twist to earlier arguments, not only will improve the lot of their poorest residents but also will be more prosperous overall than those that don't. As to how exactly the new metropolitanism will produce new wealth, he is disconcertingly vague.

Though big-city mayors and elite opinion makers like Rusk's views and consider them mainstream, on the political front lines

Illustrations by Arnold Roth

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these ideas don't carry much weight. Across the country local activists have been rejecting the push to create bigger jurisdictions. They want to retain—or create—smaller governments, by seceding from existing city governments, by incorporating new, smaller jurisdictions carved out of larger ones, or by resisting annexation by larger governments. New Yorkers are familiar with this move toward the local: five years ago the Staten Island secession movement blazed up fiercely, though the State Legislature eventually snuffed it out. But similar efforts are catching fire in many other locales.

Most notably, in Los Angeles, the ValleyVote movement, with Governor Pete Wilson's support, proposes to detach the entire San Fernando Valley (population: 1.2 million) from the rest of the city. Proponents say such a secession could come to a referendum vote in the year 2000. The next step could well be to split up the residential expanse of the Valley into 23 newly incorporated municipalities. In Florida four successful referenda since 1992 have given birth to four new municipalities within Dade County, the administrative district for 1.5 million residents of the suburbs surrounding central Miami. Six other new municipalities are in the works. Around Tucson, suburbs that have long resisted annexation by the central city leaped at the chance state legislation offered them last year to incorporate as independent towns. Two have already done so; six others have proposed or already scheduled votes. Suburban activists outside Houston and Atlanta have strenuously resisted the efforts of those cities to bite off pieces of their suburbs. Nor is localism limited to the U.S. In Canada, Citizens for Local Democracy (whose leaders include revered urban theorist Jane Jacobs) successfully organized resistance to the Ontario government's "megacity" plan to submerge, under the banner of cost reduction, six independent municipalities into a Rusk-like greater Toronto.

Voters' common sense tells them that the closer they are to government, the more it will respond to their demands.

The conflict between localism and metropolitan government is a clash not over form but philosophy of government. To liberals like Rusk, localism reflects yet another example of what journalist Robert Kuttner has called the "revolt of the haves"; it is a greedy retreat from the commonweal, sacrificing the city for the short-term improvement of the suburbs. But Rusk believes the revolt of the haves is futile: it threatens the suburbs themselves, as inner-city chaos overtakes the surrounding communities. In this vein, Myron Orfield, a state legislator from Minneapolis and author of an influential text on metropolitan government, laments that "powerful resentments, based on class and race," have prevented cities from merging with suburbs to create efficiency and social justice. If the suburbs shared their often considerable riches, older, poorer neighborhoods wouldn't decline into dilapidated urban ghettos.

Orfield's view, the elite wisdom about secession and incorporation movements, is simply wrong. Localism is popular not because it promises a sweetheart deal for a few privileged suburbanites at the expense of the greater good, or because the unsophisticated fail to understand a demonstrably superior metropolitan approach. Instead, it rests on common sense—which economics and political science amply confirm. Voters' common sense tells them that the closer they are to government, the more it will respond to their demands. They will see their hard-earned tax dollars spent on the kind of projects they prefer and will have a greater assurance that interest groups—such as public employee unions—will not usurp local government for the benefit of their own members, who may not even live in the city in which they work.

In fact, there are good reasons to go one step further. To improve older neighborhoods in older cities requires not a single, bigger government but increased numbers of smaller ones. Rather

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than expanding cities, we should break them up into an array of independent, neighborhood-based governments that would set their own property-tax rates, elect their own officials, and give city residents the same control and sense of community that their suburban counterparts take for granted. City dwellers could direct public spending to the things they consider most important. They could ask the local public works director why their street went unplowed or unpaved, or push the local chief of police to deal with the rowdy playground gang before things get out of hand. Inevitably, such a system would favor economic growth over redistribution. Freed from centralized bureaucracies, these neighborhoods, including many of the older, poorer ones, would prosper. As for paying to maintain, or build, expensive regional infrastructure systems: for that purpose, these independent local governments could cooperate in a loose confederation, or "special purpose district."

I will admit to some personal bias in all this. As a resident and onetime minor elected official in

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Brookline—a Boston suburb of 56,000—I'm convinced that the town's decision 125 years ago not to merge with the central city is a key reason for our good schools, clean streets, and low crime rate, despite our closeness to the central city. My town is a living advertisement for the local control that leaders of today's secession, incorporation, and annexation campaigns seek.

These campaigns don't add up to a movement in the sense that metropolitanism is a movement, supported by foundations and promoted at conferences. The leaders of the new localism are responding to purely local conditions. Yet though they are generally unaware of their counterparts elsewhere, local activists make strikingly similar observations and complaints. Consider two of the most active and important sites of the new localism, both in areas of rapid population growth—southern California and south Florida.

In Los Angeles the head of the ValleyVote movement is a commercial real estate broker named Jeff Brain, whose office, in a converted toy store at the rear of a strip mall, overflows with clippings from the *L.A. Daily News*, the Valley newspaper, which has pushed hard for a secession vote. In his professional life, Brain rents out storefronts in this and other small strip malls along the length of Ventura Boulevard, one of the San Fernando Valley's main streets. Brain also helps organize a network of 30 local home owner and business organizations, with such typical LA names as the Tract 115105 Neighborhood Association. Though some affluent enclaves dot the Valley, on the whole this is Queens, not Westchester; New Jersey, not Connecticut. This is the valley of the shop-till-you-drop Valley Girl, where residents in small ranch houses and whitewashed apartments gaze up at the Santa Monica mountains, beyond which lies Beverly Hills. The Valley—white, middle-class, and heavily Jewish—is increasingly Latino and Asian. Some 27 percent of Valley residents are Spanish-speaking; 11 percent live below the poverty line. New restaurants sport signs in Farsi or Cyrillic characters; at Torah-land, a growing Orthodox Jewish community looks for bargains on yarmulkes and talises.

Jeff Brain's complaints are very specific. Most nights, only two police cars patrol his own community of Sherman Oaks, which, like other residential areas in the Valley, has its own name but not its own government. Sidewalk cleaning in the commercial areas along Ventura Boulevard is dismal, even though merchants pay extra fees to the city for a private contractor to do the work. Brain also resents the private school tuition he

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pays for his four children to keep them out of the giant LA Unified School District, with its unmanageable 800,000 students. Moreover, the city pays little for Valley road repair (only $4 million out of a $28 million budget), even though the Valley contains a third of the city's total area. Look at the number of residents per City Council member, Brain complains: some 250,000 people per Council district. With fewer than 100,000 residents, nearby independent cities like Burbank and San Fernando have their own mayors and city councils, along with lower business taxes and an easier permit process. Brain looks enviously at older commercial main streets in these neighboring communities, where small beautification steps have paid big dividends by helping

Slicing the Big Apple

In New York, the largest and often the least manageable U.S. city, might well be the legal candidate for decentralization into smaller, more citizen-friendly political subdivisions. Ever since Mayor Giuliani, New York's unusually pioneering architecture of effective government that has sharply upgraded the quality of life, enhanced the efficiency of its municipal services, reduced levels of crime and corruption, and created the nation's strongest economy. But Giuliani is the first mayor whom New York's recently created term limits law will affect, and after his obligatory departure in 2002, the city may quickly resume its descent into disorder and decline.

Millions of suburbanites revere New York, but few have attained the best guarantee of good government is not a brilliant mayor but having responsible smaller jurisdictions deliver public services. Moreover, urban life is less alienating when people see themselves as members of stable local communities. Therefore, New Yorkers should consider a scheme of radical decentralization that would subdivide New York, like London, into a collection of independent smaller municipalities. Let's call them townships.

These towns may resemble New York's existing community districts, but they would have substantially more authority. They would be truly self-governing, and as in London, they would have names, not numbers. New Yorkers already consider themselves residents of Forest Hills, Sheepshead Bay, or Tribeca; now these areas would graduate from being merely informally recognized localities to becoming governmentally autonomous municipalities like Rockville or Princeton.

The precise boundaries would need to be set. Perhaps they could conform to those of New York's existing 59 community districts, which now have only an advisory role in local services. But if the new towns provide local policing and zoning, their boundaries need to be reconciled with those of 76 precincts and 32 local school districts—a task that a redistricting commission might handle. The new towns will need a governance system. I propose that they be governed, like New York's 55 boroughs, by a chief executive and council elected for four- to four-year terms. Elections could be year-round and should be held on the same day as those for all other local and state offices.

How will the change for New Yorkers in a decentralized city? About a third of the new townships, where New York's most affluent residents live, will be superimposed on already desirable city neighborhoods unchallenged by plans to merge schools and uneven local services. Decentralization will make them the most sought-after communities in the region. Having the ability to tax themselves and control schools and other key services, residents of fashionable Manhattan and Brooklyn neighborhoods will suddenly enjoy suburban-level services along with their urban amenities. Residents of the city's more suburban areas, like Douglaston and Jamaica Estates in Queens or Eastchester in the Bronx, will find themselves in communities with amenities matching those of Great Neck or Greenwich, while having access to an urban environment and mass transit. New

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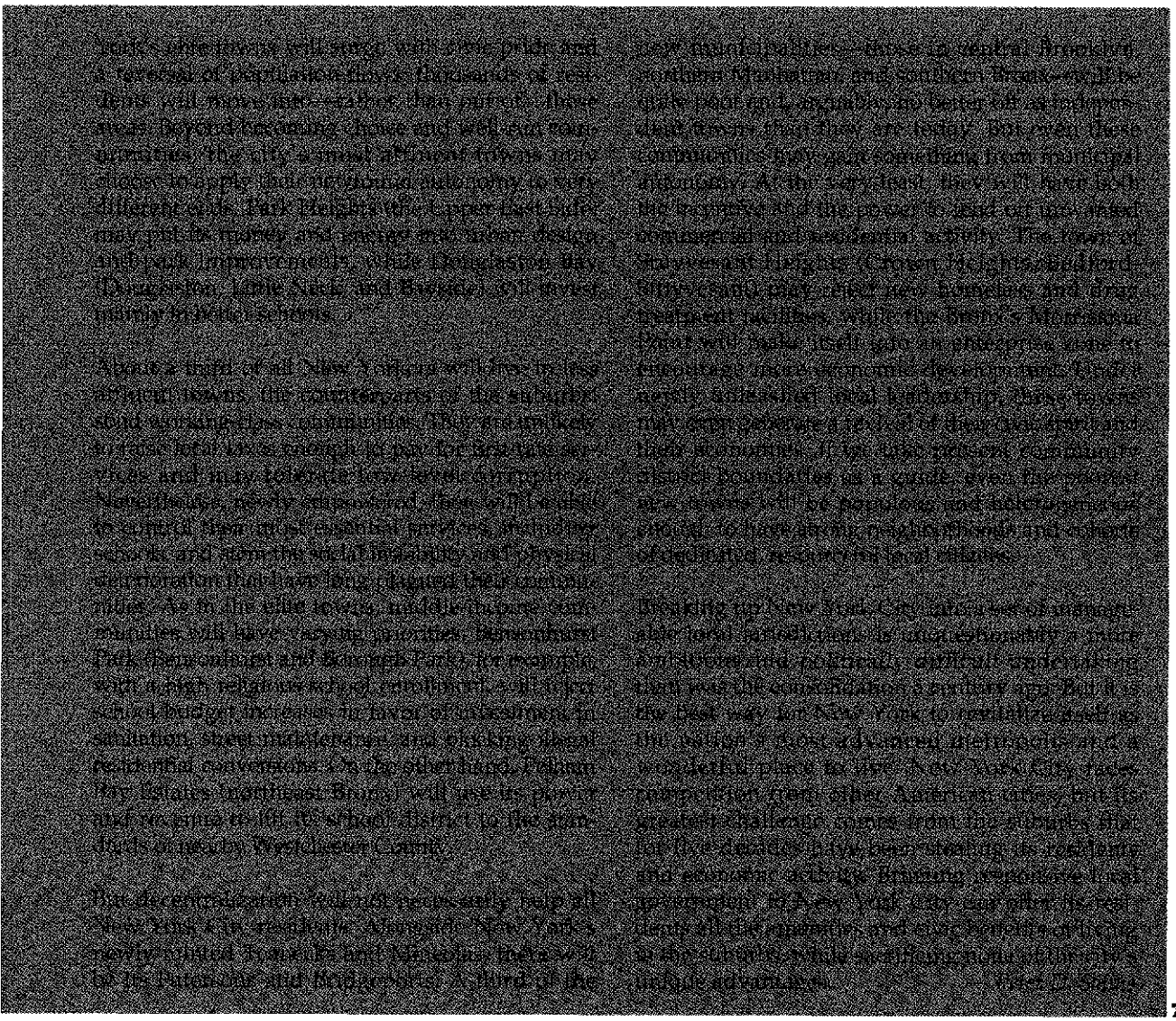
to attract and retain shoppers and businesses, while Van Nuys Boulevard, another of the Valley's main drags, grows shabbier by the day.

For Brain, being too distant from local government to get anything accomplished is more than a metaphor. "In order to get something for our area," he observes, "we have to go downtown. That's an hour's drive to start. Then we have to convince council members from all over the city. They say, 'Why should you get something if my neighborhood doesn't?' Then you reach an impasse."

Such frustration drove Brain to mount a successful campaign this past fall to persuade Governor Wilson to sign legislation allowing city neighbor-



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hoods to detach, without first getting the permission of their existing city councils. Next he'll try to get the more than 100,000 petition signatures necessary to get a regional advisory board to examine the issue, as required by law. Brain expects the petition drive—and then the secession vote—to succeed. And he believes that large parts of Los Angeles will follow suit, seeking to detach and incorporate on their own. "We've had interest from throughout the city and throughout the state," he says.

In Miami, localism has advanced even further. From his dark, wood-paneled office as chairman of one of the city's leading law firms, Eugene Stearns has already been through the fire of referenda campaigns like those Jeff Brain anticipates. A native Miamian who has watched the city change around him, Stearns is no political neophyte. He helped run the campaigns of former Florida Democratic governor Ruben Askew and served as his chief of staff. He thought he had left political life behind to build up his law firm—until 1991, when he heard that developers planned two new 800-room hotels close to his home in Key Biscayne, an enclave of 8,500 residents within so-called unincorporated Dade County. Key Biscayne had no local government: the county government, housed in a downtown Miami office tower, supplied the police force, firefighters, and garbage collectors.

Since Key Biscayne's incorporation as a village, its property valuation has skyrocketed by some $800 million.

"I figured I was a fairly connected guy, and I wanted to do something to get this hotel decision re-examined," he says—"not necessarily to block it entirely but to scale it down some. And I was told, 'This is a done deal: forget it.'" His unexpected sense of powerlessness led him to reflect on the overall quality of services in Key Biscayne.

Well-known and affluent, with luxurious waterfront condos and pastel Mediterranean-style homes, Key Biscayne nevertheless had embarrassingly pitted streets and shabby recreation areas far worse than in nearby independent municipalities—even blue-collar ones like Miami Shores, where many cops and schoolteachers lived. As in Los Angeles's San Fernando Valley, political representation was disproportionately weak, with just 13 out of 100 county commissioners representing the 1.5 million county residents who lived outside the core city of Miami (population: 365,000). Stearns grew convinced that centralized government made it too difficult for citizens to influence decisions about their neighborhoods. Moreover, he was certain that bigger government, with its layers of management, wasted on unproductive bureaucracies funds that would otherwise flow into the capital improvements—new baseball fields, new public docks—that he and his neighbors wanted. "It all comes down to bigger isn't better," he says.

Stearns decided not to waste time fighting specific policies but to attack the underlying problem. He proposed to lead an independence movement to incorporate Key Biscayne as a village, with its own council and full-time manager. In November 1992 the incorporation referendum sailed through with a resounding 70 percent of the vote. Since then, Key Biscayne's assessed property valuation has skyrocketed by some $800 million, because local control has made the municipality a still more desirable place to live—and Eugene Stearns, from his nerve center in downtown Miami, has become the leader of an incorporation movement throughout south Florida. He has provided his law firm's services *pro bono* to leaders of four similar referenda, with others in the offing. Three of them succeeded, making Stearns the godfather to the new municipalities of Pine Crest, Aventura, and Sunny Isles, as well as his own Key Biscayne.

The referendum that failed is Stearns's most interesting battle. He served as advisor to Shirley Gibson, a black retired policewoman who sought to carve out an independent munic-

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ipality called Destiny from the subdivisions surrounding the car dealerships and racetracks on Route 441, north of Miami. The area, 80 percent black, is a magnet for upwardly mobile African-American families from inner-city Miami neighborhoods like Liberty City and Overtown. But Gibson, an entrepreneur who had started a business that quirkily combined two of her own interests—a beauty-supply-shop-*cum*-private-detective-agency—believed that, for all the energetic striving of its residents, the area was suffering neglect.

"We had the worst bus service, the worst parks, the worst police protection," she recalls. "The kids couldn't drink out of the water fountains in the parks, and the bathrooms didn't work." Yet county planners told Gibson that she should be grateful for what she had—that the proposed new city was a "recipient community": it received services valued at $21 million but paid only $17 million in taxes. Gibson rejected this. She knew from experience that the high overhead costs of centralized county government gobbled up tax money before it could reach her neighborhood parks. "I'd been a policewoman; I knew that you had six layers of supervision in a big department and only two in a smaller one," she explains. Stung, too, by the condescending label "recipient community," with its insinuation of public assistance, Gibson, with Stearns's help, led the 1995 incorporation campaign.

And she would have won, had not the Miami Dolphins' Joe Robbie football stadium stood on the outskirts of the proposed new municipality. Owner Wayne Huizenga, concerned about how a new local government might tax his stadium, led an opposition that outspent the pro-Destiny forces by almost eight to one ($300,000-plus to $40,000) and emphasized the possible job losses middle-class black families, many of whom worked for government, might face. Destiny failed to gain incorporation by 700 votes of the 5,500 cast. Gibson does not rule out another referendum, although a change in the law now requires the permission of the sitting Dade County commissioners. Despite the loss, Gibson notes, services in her neighborhood have improved, a change she attributes to the mere threat of secession.

The reason to believe that these incorporation and secession leaders are right begins with history—even though the metropolitanists assert that history is on their side. But in fact the consolidation of formerly independent municipalities in New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Boston, which metropolitan advocate Rusk cites to buttress his case, didn't arise from a Rusk-like belief that bigger was better. Rather, newly developing areas saw consolidation as the best means to plug into the services core cities offered. By the 1920s, as soon as suburbs discovered other means short of consolidation to hook up to regional infrastructure—typically special-purpose districts—they stopped joining central cities.

Even when given the option of voting for mergers and annexations, Americans historically have supported the creation of more local governments, not fewer. "The American system is one of complete decentralization, the primary and vital ideal of which is that local affairs should be managed by local authorities," wrote legal observer Thomas Cooley perceptively in 1868. Municipalities have differentiated themselves from one another for good reason. The formation of independent cities and towns fueled the explosive economic takeoff of the late 1800s; it defused tensions between immigrant and native-born; and it allowed the upwardly mobile to build communities that reflected their hard-won new social status. Industrialists, including the founders of Cudahy (incorporated so they could build a meatpacking plant just south of Milwaukee), have always sought safe haven from the hands of government regulators. A boon for owners, such municipalities also provided a living wage for employees and buttressed the property values of residential areas in nearby municipalities. Distinct ethnic and cultural groups established their own niches, as in the once "dry" towns of Pasadena and Compton, California, or Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts, where Methodists for many years used local control to keep out alcohol. The lesson is crystal clear: independent jurisdictions are a crucial means through which a

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nation as diverse as the U.S. can develop a *modus vivendi* among peoples of sharply different values and wildly various backgrounds.

Even as advocates (including the Department of Housing and Urban Development) beat the drums for metropolitan government, the number of local governments in the U.S. kept rising. From 1952 to 1992, the number of municipalities grew from 16,807 to 19,279. While a few core cities—Indianapolis, Jacksonville, and Nashville—have merged with their surrounding counties to form metro governments in recent years, citizens have overwhelmingly scorned the metro vision over the past half-century. Champaign and Urbana in Illinois twice rejected consolidation, even though they're often thought of as a single college town. Voters in the Knoxville and Richmond areas refused city-county consolidation, as did voters in David Rusk's own Albuquerque (before Rusk's tenure as mayor). Even where citizens actually have embraced metro governments, suburbanization has inexorably continued, with metro governments generally stalled at their original lines.

When municipalities lose residents, property values fall, leaving remaining residents with a powerful incentive to figure out what's gone wrong.

There's no shortage of theory to explain why this long-standing American preference for localism makes sense. The key fact: we don't all want the same things from our local jurisdictions. Those with small children may care most about education, unmarried joggers may want to spend public money on parks, and the tidy-minded may want the streets cleaned three times a week. Forty years ago, in a brief but classic essay, economist Charles Tiebout argued that local governments do more than coexist side by side. Instead, they compete with one another for residents by offering different packages of services. Of course, wealthier communities can provide more amenities than poorer ones; that's part of the free-market incentive structure. But at equivalent income levels, governments can differentiate themselves, in terms of the kinds of services they offer and also the cost-efficiency with which they provide them. If they fail to provide what people want at reasonable cost, residents can "vote with their feet," wrote Tiebout. When municipalities lose residents, property values fall, leaving remaining residents with a powerful incentive to figure out what's gone wrong.

I can attest, through personal experience, that Tiebout's argument is sound. Several years ago, I agreed to join a volunteer financial-planning advisory committee to examine my town's costs for specific services. The committee immediately gathered cost data from comparable municipalities. Where our costs differed, we asked hard questions. Why do our police officers take twice as much sick time as those in other towns? Is it a management problem, a defect in our union contract—or are our police simply older than those on other forces? How can we improve matters? We were acting as Tiebout would have us act: "Public service agencies," he has written, "may be forced to compete over the service levels offered in relation to the taxes charged."

Daniel Elazar, director of Temple University's Center for the Study of Federalism, observes that some of the nation's most smoothly functioning cities may owe part of their success to competition of this sort. Elazar notes that in the Bay Area, three flourishing midsize cities—San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose—compete (and also cooperate) with one another and with Silicon Valley towns like Palo Alto and Sunnyvale. Prosperous and efficient Minneapolis and St. Paul, along with a gaggle of nearby cities with populations between 100,000 and 150,000, do the same.

In other words, because of this competitive, antimonopolistic mechanism, smaller—not bigger, as the metropolitanists contend—is more efficient. New research from the Institute of Government at Florida International University, located right

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in the middle of Dade County's wave of incorporations, soundly debunks the big-is-efficient argument that is the linchpin of the metropolitanists' case. Public administration professor Milan Dluhy examined the costs per resident for a wide range of core municipal services in metropolitan Dade County and in 24 "fragmented municipalities" within and around the county. Dluhy found that economies of scale existed in only two areas: fire protection and library services. Localities can provide all the other services—police, recreation, public works, waste management—at equal or less cost.

Evidence from other economists strongly supports the case that smaller is cheaper and more efficient than bigger. David Sjoquist analyzed 48 metropolitan areas in the South and found that competing local governments kept costs down. As he puts it: "The level of expenditures will fall as the number of jurisdictions rises." Conversely, Richard Wagner and Warren Webber, looking at counties in 16 southern states, found that consolidation and centralization led to greater spending, not less.

As government jurisdictions get larger, control melts away from voters; realizing the difficulty of influencing officials, individuals give up.

Why exactly would costs increase after governments merge? Jane Jacobs tartly gave one explanation in a recent talk: "Anyone who has had to deal with a big-city bureaucracy knows that the idea that bigger is more efficient is laughable." Another explanation invokes Tiebout's point about differing "packages" of government services. A newly consolidated government, replacing a group of smaller jurisdictions that had offered a variety of service packages with differing costs, comes under pressure to provide the same package of services to everyone—and always the highest level and greatest variety of services, since no community is willing to accept a service cut.

Tiebout's smaller-is-better theory finds interesting confirmation in National Bureau of Economic Research economist Caroline Hoxby's investigation of one key government service: schools. By Tiebout's lights, many small school districts should be better and cheaper than one huge one, because they will compete with one another to minimize costs and, within the confines of state regulations, to offer somewhat different educational "packages." Hoxby looked at metropolitan areas in which lots of small municipalities run their own school districts. Exhibit A: the Boston area, with some 70 municipal school districts half an hour from downtown. Many have only a few thousand students, compared with Dade County, Florida's Amalgamated District, with 400,000-plus students, or the LA Unified School District's 800,000 students. Sure enough, Hoxby found (after controlling for a wide range of factors, from race to income, that could explain variation) that even a fairly small increase in the number of districts—from 3 to 13, say—had a big effect. Costs per child dropped 17 percent, while reading and math scores went up 2 percent—perhaps, in part, because parents attended school meetings and other school events at a rate two-thirds higher than in larger districts.

But if you look at school districts across the country, you see relatively few Tiebout-style systems like the Boston area's but rather vast, centralized amalgamated districts that look like the metropolitanists' dream come true. And their performance doesn't do much to buttress the theory that big jurisdictions are efficient and cost-effective. Between 1952 and 1992, even though consolidation bypassed America's municipalities, it did descend upon the nation's school districts, reducing their number by over 75 percent (from 67,355 to 14,422). At the same time, costs skyrocketed and quality plummeted—not coincidentally. Nor is it a coincidence that teachers' unions swelled in power: larger jurisdictions put average citizens at a disadvantage, since even the most zealous unpaid neighborhood activist is little match for the full-time paid staffs of public-sector unions,

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who know local officials and understand how the system works well enough to make the interest of their members prevail.

In the same way, as government jurisdictions get larger, control gradually melts away from voters; realizing the difficulty of influencing officials, and increasingly impotent against the organized electoral power of public employees, individuals give up. As Jeff Brain likes to point out, voter participation is much lower in the San Fernando Valley areas that are part of Los Angeles than in those that are independent municipalities. Growing voter apathy gives organized public employees and other special interests a clear field to advance their own agendas, while the higher campaign spending that comes with big government allows unions and government contractors to sway officials by providing campaign funds and volunteers.

Political science sheds further light on why voters tune out. Successful governmental systems, political scientists believe, have a high degree of political homogeneity—where voters generally share similar preferences—in contrast to political heterogeneity, with tightly wound tensions among many disparate voting groups. Given a large number of small jurisdictions, voters can sort themselves out according to what kind of place they want to live in, and they can pick the kind of representation they want. Homogeneity is high, and even losing voters are not violently disappointed and disaffected, since they live within the same universe of desires as the winners. There is no large group of voters whose dearest hopes have been dashed and who feel impotent and excluded. Maybe that's why polls consistently show that local government is much more popular than the federal government—which has taken on more and more tasks for itself but is not very likely to reflect a homogeneous preference. The title of a 1959 essay by James Pennock sums up this idea with still-unsurpassed brevity: "Federal and Unitary Government: Disharmony and Frustration."

Not only is metropolitanist Rusk mistaken when he asserts that bigger jurisdictions are more efficient than smaller; he is equally in error when he claims that they promote growth better. He contends that "elastic" cities—those empowered to annex new-growth suburbs—will economically outperform "inelastic" cities, frozen into historic boundaries. "Metro areas containing elastic cities," he pronounces, "have had higher growth rates than metro areas with inelastic cities." But economists John Blair, Samuel Staley, and Zhongcai Zhang have left this assertion in tatters. Rusk appears to have made the classic mistake of confusing correlation with causality. If cities that annexed their suburbs after World War II prospered, that does not prove that the annexations sparked the prosperity, and certainly Rusk offers no explanation of why they would. These economists observe that the cities Rusk singles out as elasticity success stories outperformed "for reasons unrelated to elasticity": Rusk compared newer-growth, non-manufacturing cities with older, manufacturing-based cities during a period of manufacturing decline, and he compared state capitals to non-capitals during a time of governmental growth. Finally, they note, if you compare the entire metropolitan areas of inelastic cities with the metropolitan areas of their elastic rivals, there's not much difference. Rusk himself notes that elastic metro Houston built new housing for 2.4 million new residents between 1950 and 1990, while inelastic metro Detroit built housing for 1.9 million. Not very persuasive evidence of elasticity's superiority.

The reverse of Rusk's proposition is closer to the truth: metro government is more likely to discourage than to foster growth. And further, quite possibly the older, inner-city neighborhoods Rusk is most concerned about—for him they are the most telling indictment of inelasticity—are depressed partly because of their imprisonment within the growth-stifling big-city governments we already have.

Why? Consider what I'll call the golden goose effect. Communities are willing (indeed, eager) to accept new development, the golden goose, so long as they can be sure of getting the golden eggs—strengthening their tax base and adding or improving such neighborhood amenities as schools, parks, or police protection. Metro gov-

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ernment changes this whole calculation. Suddenly there is no guarantee that city hall will use new tax revenues the neighborhood generates to improve the neighborhood. Without the assurance that it will be able to make use of new taxes, a community's incentives change dramatically. Suddenly new developments bring a guarantee of costs but not of benefits. Areas asked to accept the new industrial park may get no improved services or new school buildings; the additional tax revenue, if not simply swallowed up in the day-to-day administration of the consolidated government, may well be spent in other parts of the city—probably those with the most political clout, which will probably not be the poorer areas.

In fact, poorer parts of cities, much as they would presumably be eager to attract new development, have reasons to be wary of it: they may get the smoke and noise, while more affluent and politically powerful neighborhoods get superior services. I recall, as a young newspaper reporter, covering the story of a home owner in Boston's Roxbury black ghetto who fought bitterly, and successfully, to close down a large neighborhood baking plant. Why should she put up with noise and trash, she reasoned—and still have to live in an area where streets were poorly swept and police response time poor? The same reasoning helps explain neighborhood opposition to new superstores in New York. Who wants the traffic without a guarantee of improved services?

Stripped of its pretenses, the metro movement turns out to be a campaign to enlarge the growing package of social services that big cities provide.

Helping these poor neighborhoods is Rusk's real agenda for metro government, which at heart he believes will help them not so much by facilitating economic growth as by facilitating redistribution. Rusk discloses his true priorities in his book's conclusion: "It is not important that local residents have their garbage picked up by a metrowide garbage service or their parks managed by a metrowide parks and recreation department," he writes. "It is important that all local governments pursue common policies that will diminish racial and economic segregation. In baldest terms, sustained success requires moving poor people from bad city neighborhoods to good suburban neighborhoods and moving dollars from relatively wealthy suburban governments to poorer city governments."

Stripped of its pretenses about efficiency and economic growth, the metro movement turns out to be a campaign to support and enlarge the growing package of social services that our big cities provide—what might be called the municipal welfare state. Rusk asserts that those who have fled the crime and disorder of inner cities must be joined with those who have been "left behind." Even though these voters might prefer government that provides a menu of basic services—police and fire protection, public works, education—they should instead underwrite a social service edifice for the poor. Rusk never considers the possibility that these citizens recognize that the existing welfare state is an abject failure that has worsened urban life for everyone, taxing wage earners excessively and intensifying the dysfunction that Rusk deplores in underclass neighborhoods. He doesn't dream that expanding city borders to grab the wealth of those who have fled failed urban policies would simply extend the problem, not solve it. He imagines that middle-class habits will rub off on the poor if government drops them into middle-class neighborhoods, rather than understanding that it is the incentive of reaching a better neighborhood that encourages the habits of thrift and industry. Nor does he notice, or credit, the success of so many who by their own efforts have propelled themselves out of the inner city into the suburbs over the past two decades.

Instead of promising more of the redistributionist machinery that has failed so roundly over the last generation, breaking up the cities holds out a different, more valuable promise to poor neighbor-

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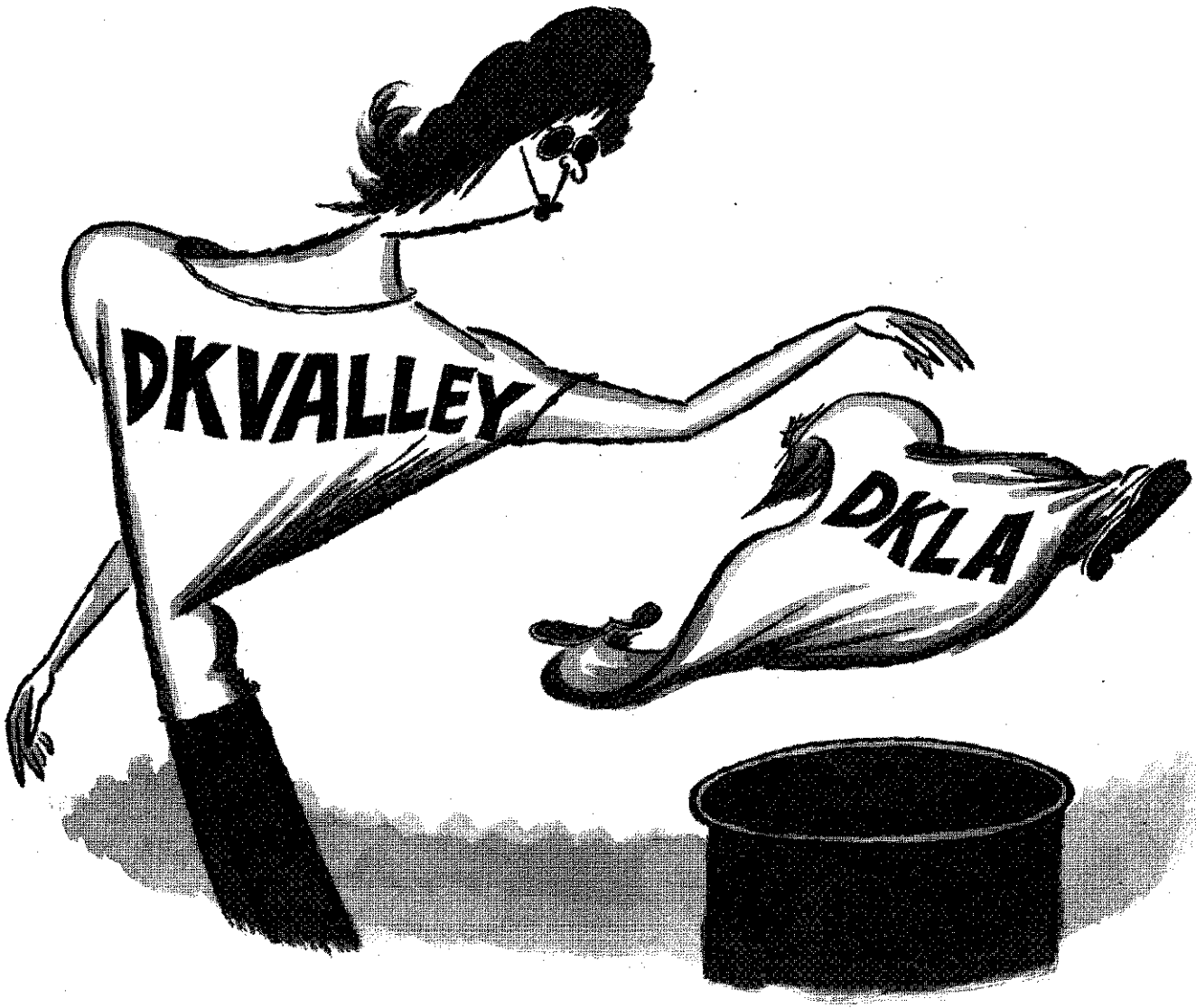

hoods: it offers them the incentive and the means to encourage economic growth. Knowing for sure, as suburbs now do, that they will benefit directly from new investment, poor municipalities would try to make their business climate accommodating—to developers, say, or street vendors or small, home-based businesses that might be zoned out elsewhere. Independent municipalities will have the option of limiting regulation and accepting employment-generating businesses, even waste-recycling centers or power plants, that middle-class areas may not want, but whose financial benefits a poor community might find well worth the costs. (State and federal health and safety standards would still apply, of course.) Neighborhoods would have the incentive to find the highest and best use of their land and buildings.

The fact that the Camdens and Newarks of the world have not prospered should not be taken as evidence that poor but independent cities can't succeed. For 30 years, such cities have focused on seeking state and federal aid for public works projects or the rebuilding of formerly middle-class housing, even after the middle class has fled,

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rather than on figuring out the economic advantages they might themselves offer. Poor but independent communities might, to be sure, become places where corrupt local officials take power; but they might, just as well, become places that can develop their own competent leadership, based on the exercise of real authority.

Whatever the complications very poor neighborhoods pose to creating a system of independent city neighborhoods, they should not obscure the tremendous benefits that such a system would bring the vast majority of neighborhoods. Not the least of these would be the new political cultures that will have a chance to take root, more communal and truly democratic than today's. Here's how it would work.

Neighborhoods that already have their own, informal identity, and often their own zip codes, would become formal municipalities. In New York, for instance, this would mean that the Upper West Side, Harlem, the Upper East Side, the Village, Canarsie, the Rockaways, Forest Hills—all the city's identifiable residential neighborhoods—would become independent municipalities, empowered to set their own property-tax rates, operate their own police and fire departments, make their own zoning and land-use decisions, pick up their own garbage, and clean and repair their own streets. This does not mean, however, that each municipality will in fact do all these things. Like suburbs, they will provide some services themselves and contract out others to either a private firm or another public entity, typically a county.

The Upper West Side, Harlem, the Village, Canarsie, the Rockaways, Forest Hills would become independent municipalities.

Just outside the Los Angeles city limits, for instance, a large number of so-called contract municipalities, members of the Los Angeles County Association of Contract Cities, contract for law enforcement services from the county sheriff's office. Cities like Bradbury and Rolling Hills have taken this as far as it can go: with but a handful of employees, they contract for *all* their services. Around Tucson, discussions are currently intense about what price Pima County should charge newly incorporated towns for, say, a week of a deputy sheriff's time. Over time, individual municipalities will doubtless figure out which services should remain local, which joint effort best provides, and what is the best way to pressure outside contractors to keep prices down. Key Biscayne attorney Eugene Stearns believes that ordinary police protection is best provided at the local level but that the cost of bomb squads or SWAT teams—operations that any single jurisdiction rarely uses—should be shared. Similarly, it may make sense for municipalities to operate their own school systems, as Caroline Hoxby's research suggests, but to form a buyer's pool for select educational goods or services. The costs and revenues of those services for which metropolitan economies of scale exist—as Milan Dluhy's research indicates—could be shared through special-purpose districts that would oversee airports, say, or libraries or arterial roads. Such districts have swiftly and steadily proliferated over the last two decades.

Key to any urban breakup would be figuring out which functions would be local and which would be regional. And what amount of the existing debt would each new municipality inherit? The residents of a jurisdiction containing the region's water treatment plant, clearly, would not become solely liable for the debt payments related to its construction. But what about school buildings or recreation facilities? "We expect," observes Richard Close, an attorney who has actively promoted San Fernando Valley secession, "that figuring out the terms of separation will keep a major accounting firm busy for several years."

Not every public facility or geographic area should come under the control of those who live in or near it. Voters in an entire metropolitan area should control what Eugene Stearns calls "regionally significant areas," either through regional

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votes or through appointed commissions chosen from the entire metropolitan area. In practice, this would mean that such entities as airport authorities, metropolitan-wide water supply and sewage districts, and port authorities would function as before.

It would also mean that a metropolitan area's central business district would be governed by a mayor and a city council whom voters from the entire metro area would elect. Who exactly would be eligible to vote? The Census Bureau already provides a framework for eligibility by delineating which municipalities—by virtue of their preponderance of economic ties—lie within a single "standard metropolitan statistical area." Those living within the New York SMSA, including those in parts of Nassau and Westchester counties—and perhaps parts of New Jersey and Connecticut as well—would have the right to vote for a metro mayor and council, who would set policy for midtown and lower Manhattan. Suburbanites would also get to vote for their own mayors, just as residents of the former City of New York would get to vote for their local neighborhood mayors, too.

Some new municipalities wouldn't have to raise all their tax revenues internally. Eugene Stearns—who envisions conjuring such new municipalities as Little Havana, Little Managua, and Coconut Grove out of Miami—proposes that well-to-do municipalities share a percentage of their local revenues with poorer communities. "I want to make clear," he says, "that this is not a rich man's attempt to avoid the cost of government." New municipal boundaries, he suggests, might divvy up poor communities among richer neighboring areas. Any municipal breakup campaign must recognize that some sort of regional revenue sharing will have to guarantee that all areas have decent schools and adequate police and fire protection. But assuring, say, a floor below which school spending must not fall is a far cry from aiming at overall tax equalization.

Stearns's proposal should serve as the start of a discussion, not the final word. What percentage of tax revenues should municipalities share? And who should pay it? All communities above a certain income level? All communities above the property tax median? How would cities like New York, which finance public assistance in part locally, finance it after breakup—and who would determine the levels of support, since cutting the size of the dysfunctional edifice of low-income assistance is a likely and desirable outcome of breaking up the cities? Only the winnowing of the political process will answer such questions.

The one thing we shouldn't do is to use the central business district's property-tax revenues to subsidize tax rates in residential neighborhoods. Such redistribution dampens business development. The better approach is to use Stearns's revenue sharing to accomplish desirable redistribution desirable and to reduce, radically, central business-district taxes. Let the office buildings and residents of the economic heart of the city pay to support the actual services they require; beyond that, let the economic value they generate be reflected in the property values—and property taxes—of the residential areas. Keeping commercial taxes low will keep businesses in the cities—and preclude politicians from cutting deals with favored firms, offering lower taxes in exchange for staying put.

This is a radical proposal, true. The neighborhoods of our big cities have long been bound together; residents think of themselves as New Yorkers or Chicagoans. But they also think of themselves as residents of Flatbush and Canarsie—and in that capacity they lack the means of exerting political control over the places they call home, in contrast to people short distances away on Long Island or in Westchester County, who have, in effect, greater rights to influence where they live. Perhaps the strongest argument in favor of the unthinkable possibility of breaking up the cities is that the movement to do so has already, spontaneously, begun. David Rusk has written that we should not consider the "political geography of mature metropolitan areas" to be "immutable." Just so—but not in the way he believes. •

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Philanthropy That Worked

Leo Trachtenberg

Of all New York's experiments in helping the poor, few succeeded more resoundingly than the one that sprang from the alliance of the great Jewish-American financier Jacob Henry Schiff and a singular young woman named Lillian Wald. They met in the summer of 1893. In the years that followed, they established a model of private philanthropy and self-help that, without yielding power to bureaucrats, public or private, helped sustain the hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants who began inundating the Lower East Side around 1880. Their collaboration produced enduring institutions—the Visiting Nurse Service of New York and the Henry Street Settlement—that still minister to the people of New York. It was an alliance that in our own time of extensive immigration can serve as an object lesson in effective philanthropy that uplifts the poor instead of making them dependent.

One summer evening in 1893, Lillian Wald arrived at the imposing East 38th Street town house of Schiff's mother-in-law, Mrs. Betty Loeb—the wife of Solomon Loeb, co-founder of the now legendary Kuhn, Loeb & Co. investment banking house. With her son-in-law, Mrs. Loeb had been supporting a "Sabbath School" on Henry Street—one of the many ways prosperous uptown German-American Jews had found of helping their needy, recently arrived downtown co-religionists. The school taught poor, uneducated, immigrant women basic hygiene, sanitation, and home nursing, badly needed on the Lower East Side. Wald, a volunteer teacher at the school, had come to Mrs. Loeb on the advice of a mutual acquaintance to ask if she and Schiff might be willing to help in a novel endeavor she was planning.

VISITING NURSE SERVICE

Born in Cincinnati in 1867 to prosperous German-Polish-Jewish immigrant parents, Lillian Wald grew up in Rochester, New York, where her father thrived in the optical goods business. At Miss Cruttenden's English-French Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies and Little Girls, she was a good student: bright, ambitious, and markedly inquisitive. Still, Vassar turned her down when she tried to enroll at 16; she was too young, the college explained.

When her older sister Julia was pregnant, Lillian made friends with the Bellevue-trained nurse who looked after her and at once decided that nursing was the career for her, too. "My life hitherto has been—I presume—the type of young American womanhood . . . such as practical mothers consider essential to a daughter's education," she wrote to Irene Sutliffe, the director of nurses at New York Hospital, when applying for training in 1889 at age 22. "This does not satisfy me now. I feel the need for serious, definite work, a need more apparent since the desire to become a professional nurse has made birth."

She graduated from New York Hospital's nursing school in 1891 and for about a year served as a nurse at the Juvenile Asylum on 176th Street—unhappily, for she disapproved of the often callous treatment of the children in the orphange for homeless immigrants. She quit to enroll in the Women's Medical College, near Stuyvesant Square, but never earned her M.D.: while studying medicine, her life changed when she volunteered to teach at the Sabbath School.

A young Lillian Wald in uniform; Jacob Schiff on his way to his office, 1913 (right).

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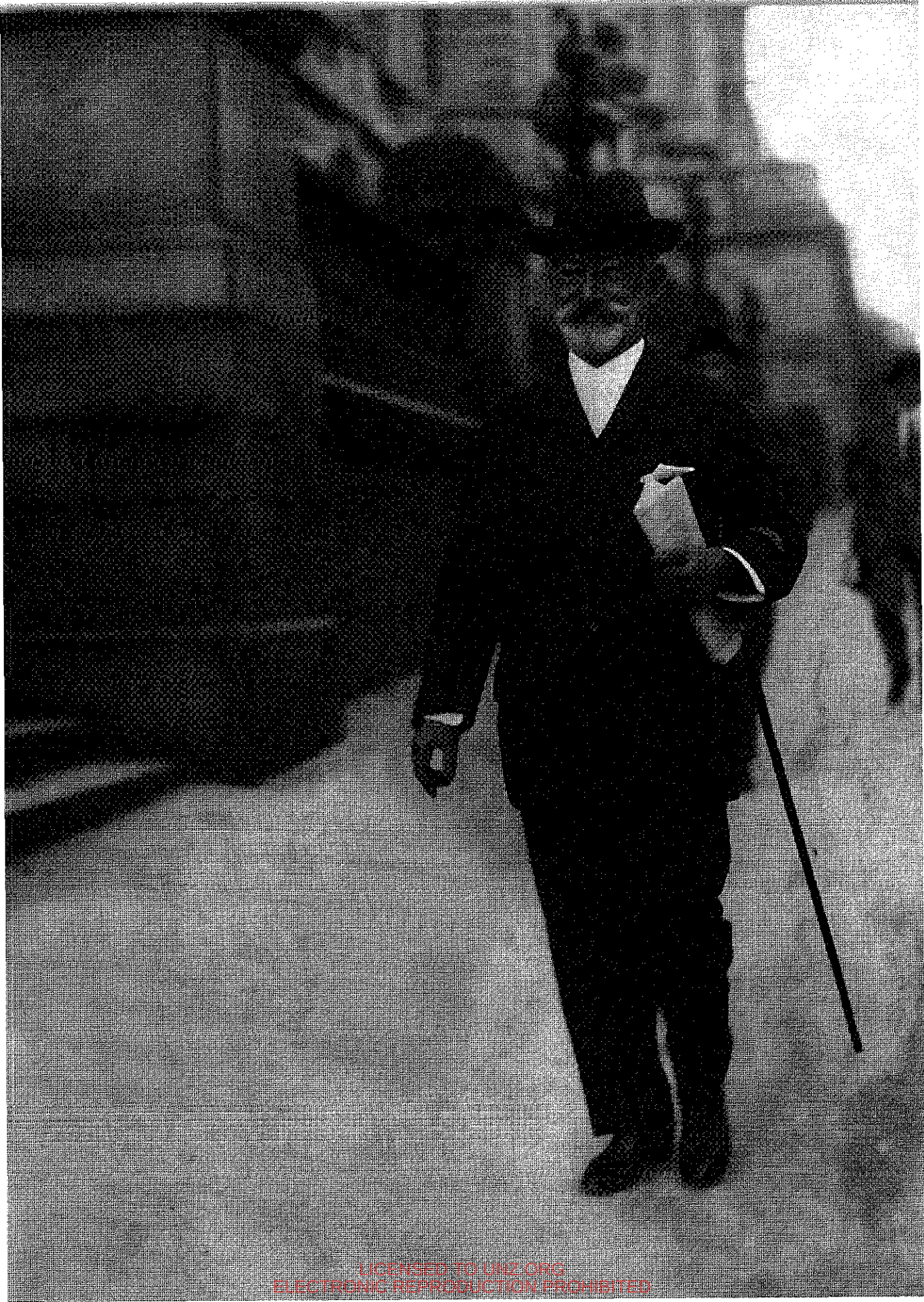

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Seated in buoyant and bustling Betty Loeb's opulent parlor that summer evening, Wald laid out the plan she had conceived and asked for money to turn it into a reality. She had experienced, she explained, a kind of epiphany, which she later described in her 1915 book, *The House on Henry Street*, widely used thereafter as a teaching text in nursing, sociology, and social welfare. "A sick woman (Mrs. Lipsky), in a squalid rear apartment . . . determined me, within half an hour, to live on the East Side," Wald wrote. "[A] little girl led me . . . over broken roadways . . . between tall, reeking houses, . . . past odorous fishstands, . . . past evil-smelling, uncovered garbage cans, . . . across a court where open and unscreened closets [toilets] were promiscuously used by men and women . . . and finally into the sickroom." Wald described how she had helped "the sick woman on a wretched, unclean bed soiled with a hemorrhage two days old." The woman was the mother in a family of seven (plus boarders), living in two poverty-stricken rooms. "At the end of my ministrations they kissed my hands," Wald recounted. "That morning's experience was a baptism of fire. . . . I rejoiced that I had had training in the care of the sick that . . . would give me an organic relationship to the neighborhood in which this awakening had come."

What she intended, Wald told the intrigued Mrs. Loeb, was to leave medical school to live on the Lower East Side. There, in association with another nurse, Mary Brewster (a direct descendant of Pilgrim leader Elder William Brewster), she would provide nursing care to the poor, regardless of their ability to pay. Would Mrs. Loeb and Mr. Schiff help?

Years later Betty Loeb's daughter, Nina, remembered her mother saying, "I have had a wonderful experience. I have just been talking to a young woman who's either crazy or a great genius." Lillian Wald wasn't crazy. In fact, she was about to create the entirely new field of public health nursing. All through her life she affected potential supporters as powerfully as she affected Betty Loeb that day. As a 1929 *New Yorker* profile put it: She "is exalted in after-dinner oratory; her good works are applauded by bankers, social leaders, Tammany sachems, Republican statesmen, and nice old ladies."

Without hesitation, Betty Loeb promised to help, a promise that affected Lillian Wald's life, the lives of thousands of residents on the East Side, and, in a signal way, the life of Jacob Schiff.

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Like the Jews on the Lower East Side, Schiff, too, had come to an alien land when, in 1865, he arrived in America from Frankfurt am Main at 18. In 1893 he was 45, rich, and influential, with a reputation on Wall Street, in corporate boardrooms, and in government ministries as a master of finance.

Always carefully dressed, his graying beard neatly trimmed, a flower usually gracing his jacket lapel, Schiff was serious, uncommonly intelligent, opinionated, and principled. Only 5 feet 2 inches, he was a commanding presence: "Though small in size," it was said of him, "his presence seemed to fill the largest doorway when he appeared. You had only to

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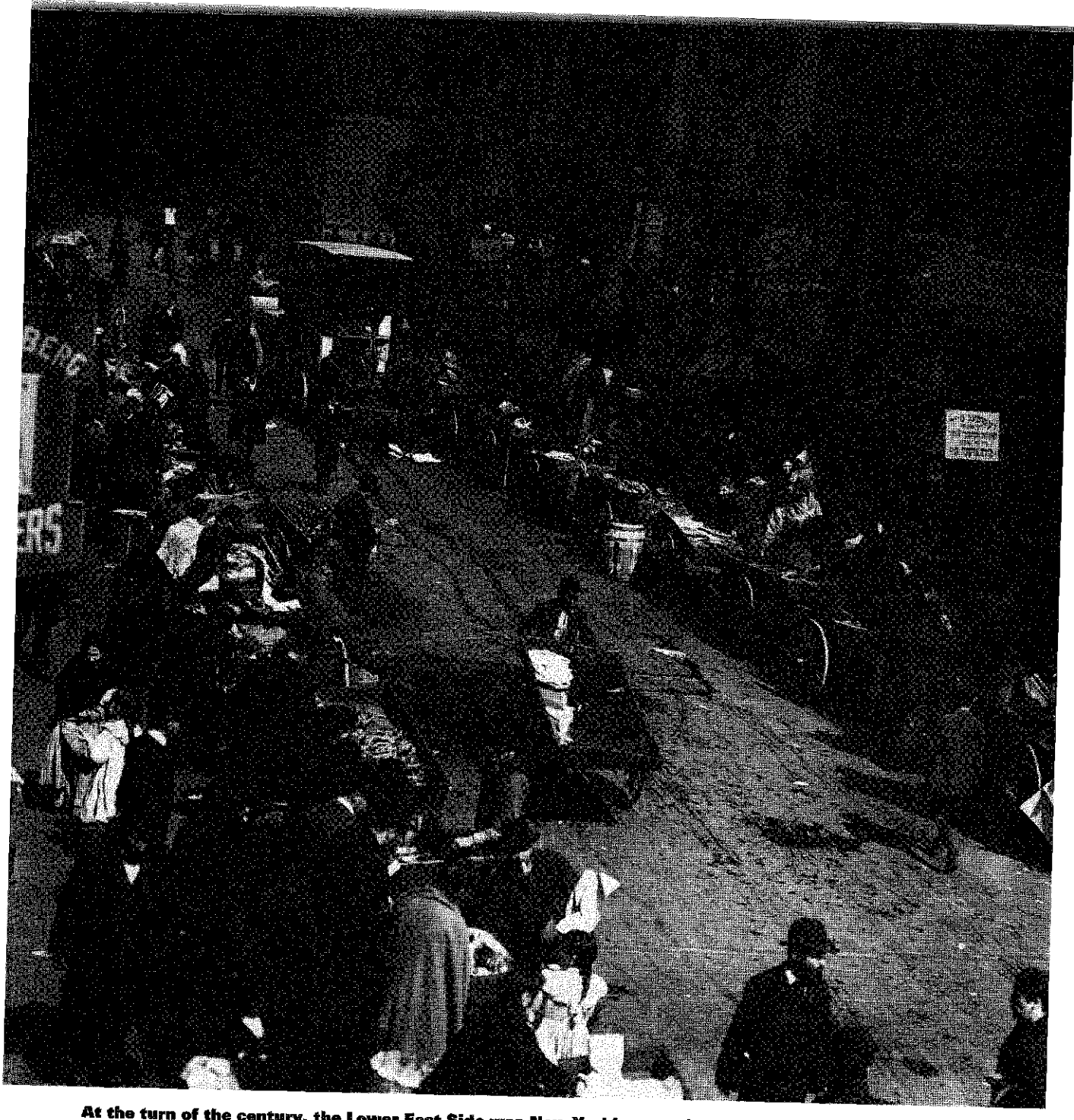

At the turn of the century, the Lower East Side was New York's most densely populated spot.

look once into those blue eyes to know he was someone to be reckoned with."

Schiff had an encyclopedic understanding of the byzantine, rapidly expanding American railroad system. The word on him was, "He carries every railroad in the country, every bit of rolling stock, every foot of track, and every man connected with each line—from the president down to the last brakeman—inside his head."

In 1901 he would stalemate the lordly J. P. Morgan in a titanic Wall Street battle to wrest control of the Northern Pacific Railroad away from Morgan's client, the breezy, slippery James J. Hill. Schiff represented E. T. Harriman, peevish, always sick-looking—and seething with dislike for Hill. When Hill moved to acquire the Chicago, Burlington

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A Lower East Side tenement family at home, 1910.

& Quincy system, Ned Harriman took alarm: control of the CB&Q would put Hill in a position to block Harriman's eastern-based railroad empire from access to Chicago. Harriman and Schiff asked for shares in the CB&Q, a request Hill dismissed. In response, Harriman, with Schiff's backing, decided to snatch control of Hill's more important Northern Pacific. It was a bold and astonishing gambit.

Schiff and Harriman began buying Northern Pacific stock in April and May at around $90; so did Hill and Morgan. The stock shot up; short-selling speculators moved in. Soon the shorts were frantically competing for stock to cover their positions as Northern Pacific's price zoomed to an absurd $1,000 a share. Finally, there was no stock left to buy: a classic corner had ensued. When—inevitably—the bubble burst and Northern's price plummeted, the rest of the market joined the rout, triggering the worst Wall Street panic in 100 years. In November the warring factions declared an armistice. Hill and Harriman agreed to share seats on the board of a holding company controlling the Northern Pacific and the railroads linked with it, including the CB&Q.

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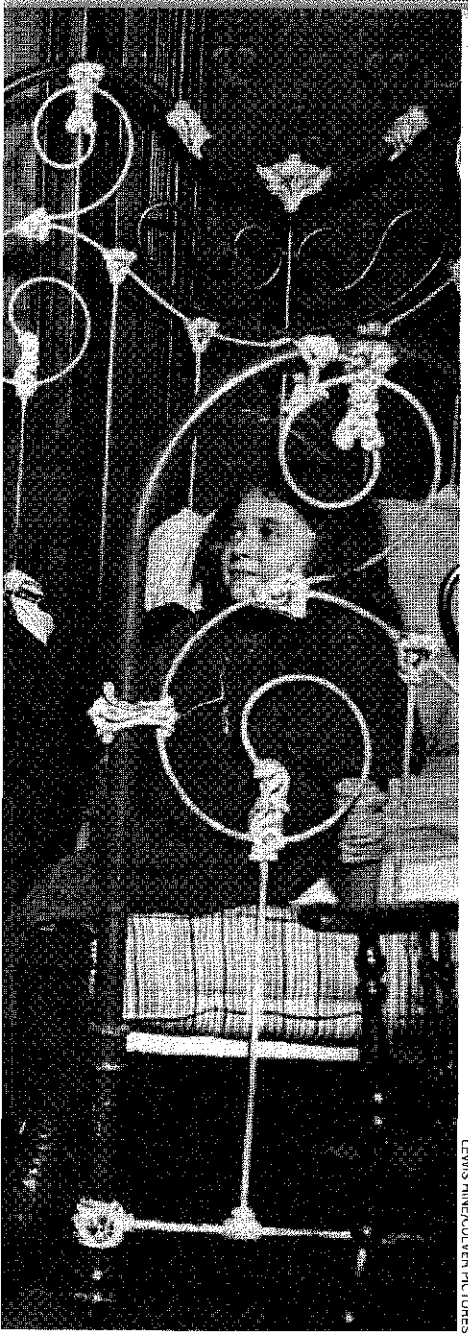

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Afterward, Morgan, ever the realist, acknowledged Schiff as his only equal (though hitherto he had disdainfully called him "that foreigner").

But multiplying his fortune wasn't Jacob Schiff's sole purpose in life. Pious, proud of his descent from a distinguished line that included rabbis and scholars and that reached back to the fourteenth century, Schiff took seriously his obligation to the less fortunate. Throughout his life he gave the Talmudic 10 percent—and, when necessary, more—of his large earnings to charity. The prayer that preceded Friday evening family meals at his home concluded: "Continue to bless us with Thy mercy, so that we may be able to share our own plenty with those less fortunate than ourselves."

Talk is cheap, of course. But from the evidence of his works, Schiff meant what he said: his philanthropies were numerous and unfailing. Though much, probably most, of his charity went to Jewish causes—Montefiore Home for Incurables (which became Montefiore Hospital), the Hebrew Aid Society, Mount Sinai Hospital, among others—by the time he died he had also given large sums to such non-Jewish causes as Barnard College, Harvard University, and the American Red Cross.

The money that Lillian Wald required wasn't much compared with Schiff's major benefactions, and upon hearing Wald's plan, the financier, by then senior partner at Kuhn, Loeb & Co., agreed to share with Mrs. Loeb the expense of supporting the two nurses and to supply them with doctors when needed. But the donation marked the start of a close, 27-year special relationship between the tycoon and the idealistic, enterprising nurse. It was so close that on the day of the Northern Pacific battle with Morgan, with Wall Street consumed by panic, Schiff phoned the startled Wald to say, "I think this is the night Mrs. Schiff and I were coming down to take dinner. Is the hour six or half past six?"

By supporting Wald, the often imperious Jacob Schiff linked himself to a woman whose compelling personality in important ways complemented his own. Schiff understood the uses of power; in both business and family matters, he could be unyielding or compromising as circumstances required. His ultimate aim was to get the job done, whether it was supporting and supervising philanthropies or financing a railroad. From the beginning of his relationship with Wald, Schiff noted traits that he himself possessed: intelligence, single-minded devotion to work, effectiveness in carrying out a mission. He saw in Wald an ally in his most cherished philanthropic cause: strengthening the Jewish community by helping new immigrants weather their immediate crises and then gain the tools to help themselves.

Beginning in the 1880s, a flood of Jews escaping the grinding poverty and anti-Semitism of eastern Europe and the brutal Russian pogroms poured through Ellis Island into the Lower East Side. They brought with them meager belongings, an abundance of hope, and a willingness to work hard—hoping, as aspiring immigrants do today, to make a life in a country that, for all its imperfections, was a land of freedom and

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opportunity. Indeed, much of today's thriving Jewish middle and upper-middle class is descended from immigrants who arrived in that fusion of poverty and striving.

Photos of the neighborhood at that time show us pushcart commerce clogging the streets amid shawled women and bearded men. The clamors of peddlers ascended, and the pervasive smells of food hawked from pushcarts mingled with the shouts of raucous children. With its blocks of begrimed tenements, the area resembled a crowded ghetto transplanted from the despotisms of eastern Europe to the City of New York.

Of the 1.5 million people living in Manhattan in 1893, five out of six lived in tenements, many under unhealthful conditions. An annual death rate of 26 per 1,000 prevailed in the borough, twice what it would be 50 years later. In the worst tenements it was much higher. Tuberculosis, the "white plague," was a constant and pervasive threat among the Jews, because many of them worked in poorly ventilated, unsanitary needle-trades sweatshops, an environment in which the bacillus thrived. Indeed, many called TB the "tailor's disease."

The tenements in which they lived weren't much healthier. "They are great prison-like structures of brick," according to a November 1888 article in *The American Magazine*, "with narrow doors and windows, cramped passages and rickety stairs. They are built through from one street to the other with a somewhat narrow building connecting them. . . . The narrow courtyard . . . in the middle is a damp, foul-smelling place, supposed to do duty as an air-shaft: had the foul fiend designed these great barracks they could not have been more villainously arranged to avoid any chance of ventilation. . . . In case of fire they would be death-traps." During July and August, tenants suffered from debilitating heat, intensified by coal-burning stoves, gas jets, and steam boilers. During a nine-day August heat wave in 1896, 420 city residents died from tainted, stifling air.

Not until 1901, when the city established the Tenement House Department, did the law compel better ventilation in new tenements. Lillian Wald and Jacob Schiff were prominent among those pressing the city government for such improvements: decent housing was always one of Wald's primary concerns, and from 1889 onward, Schiff continually denounced slum housing and used his influence to encourage legislation to eliminate or improve deteriorated tenements.

Harvard historian Moses Rischin writes: "By 1890 the Lower East Side bristled with Jews. . . . Exceeding 700 persons per acre, in 1900 the Tenth Ward was the most densely populated spot in the city." During the depression of the 1890s, with jobs scarce, evictions for nonpayment of rent were common. "In the year 1891–1892 alone," Rischin recounts, "in two judicial districts of the Lower East Side 11,550 dispossess warrants were issued."

Many of the evicted who had a little money became boarders in the already overcrowded tenement apartments. "At the hour of retiring," as a witness before the U.S. Immigration Commission testified, "cots or folded beds and in many instances mattresses are spread about the floor, resembling . . . a lot of bunks in the steerage of an ocean steamer." When Wald heard of eviction cases she often brought them to the United Hebrew Charities, a favorite Schiff cause, which frequently paid the rents outright or helped with a temporary loan.

The recently arrived immigrants were for the most part law-abiding, but around the turn of the century, some of their Americanized first-generation children fell into the gambling, loan-sharking, burglary, and prostitution rackets. The Lexow and Mazet investigations of the 1890s exposed schemes to turn the East Side into "a Klondike . . . a center of graft and illicit business," according to Rischin.

"Was he Jewish?" was the anxious question Jewish parents often asked when the cops seized a hoodlum. Or they sorrowfully shook their heads when the names of Jewish criminals hit the papers. "In 1909," Rischin writes, "some 3,000 Jewish children were brought before Juvenile Court, and in the next few years

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Street children sleeping on a steam grate in 1901.

Jewish criminals regularly made headlines."

Disturbed by the outbreak of criminal behavior among young Jews, in 1907 Schiff and other German-American Jews founded the Hawthorne School of the Jewish Protectory and Aid Society in upstate New York. The school tried to thwart juvenile delinquency by teaching useful trades—carpentry, printing, plumbing, bricklaying—along with standard classroom courses and the basics of Judaism. Hawthorne succeeded only partially, however; for years the crime problem continued to simmer on the Lower East Side.

Schiff and other prominent Jews took further measures. They established the Kehilla, a self-help group (*Kehilla* means "communal" in Hebrew) committed to resisting the anti-Semitism that Jewish criminals engendered. It created an intelligence system (which the city administration approved) to ferret out Jewish felons. It also campaigned for a central Jewish philanthropic authority and set up a mediation system for the largely Jewish garment industry. As a social force the Kehilla lasted for about ten years, waning as Jews rose gradually into the middle class and as open-ended Jewish immigration ceased after World War I.

Wald and Brewster's "organic relationship" to the Lower East Side began in September 1893, when they moved into a small fifth-floor walk-up in an old tenement at 27 Jefferson Street and started offering free nursing help to their immigrant neighbors. Soon word got around that two nurses living in the neighborhood would provide help with medical and, inevitably, other problems. Many families lacked clothing; others needed food. Wald and Brewster tried not to fail their sick and indigent neighbors.

They nursed the infirm, arranged for doctors when neces-

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sary, and took patients to hospitals. Those needing food or clothing for their families invariably—with Jacob Schiff and United Hebrew Charities providing money—received it. With additional assistance from hospitals, newspapers, and sympathetic individuals, Wald and Brewster gave the afflicted and their families sterilized milk, medicine, food, and—essential in an era without refrigerators—ice. The pioneer nurses became a familiar sight on the Lower East Side, and 27 Jefferson Street became a place where "workers in philanthropy, clergymen, Orthodox Rabbis, the unemployed, anxious parents, girls in distress, troublesome boys, came as individuals to see us," Wald wrote. Those visits energized and inspired the two nurses, despite the exhausting demands on them; from the start, Wald and Brewster knew they were a vital and sustaining force in their chosen neighborhood.

Wald became a power on the Lower East Side, recognized by politicians (including influential Tammany pols), cops, neighbors, and street people as committed and incorruptible. "Her slightest wish is accorded a respect which is never accorded the law," reported the *New York Press* in an early story about her. "The would-be violator of sanitary regulations calls her 'Boss Croker' [the Tammany leader], or 'She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed.'"

To put an official mark on their nursing rounds, Wald asked Schiff to persuade the Board of Health to let her and Brewster wear badges stating they were "Visiting Nurses Under the Auspices of the Board of Health." This was the start of New York's Visiting Nurse Service, which officially incorporated in the 1940s and which now has 23,000 active cases per day. The medallions, and Wald's and Brewster's nurse uniforms, helped open the doors of sufferers inclined to mistrust them.

For Jews were no more immune to the ignorance that often accompanied disease than were other immigrant groups. Some feared that if they were hospitalized, they'd have to drink the contents of a secret (and wholly mythical) black bottle that would put them out of their misery forever. Others suspected that the two nurses might try to convert them to Christianity.

But most immigrants gratefully opened their doors to Wald and Brewster—revealing the harsh texture of life in the slums. Heaps of refuse and swill on floors, children "scarred with vermin bites," adults suffering from typhoid, a pregnant mother living on crusts of bread, TB sufferers—these were typical cases Wald and Brewster came upon.

At the end of a long day of climbing stairs in slum tenements, of coping with filth and disease, of getting food and clothing for hungry families, the two nurses would retreat to their Jefferson Street apartment. There Wald began her routine of writing case reports and sending them to Schiff.

VISITING NURSE SERVICE

Years later she recalled: "I sat in the kitchen of our little apartment with my feet in the oven, as it was too cold to hold a pen in the frigid temperature of the room, and when the letter was written I went down the many flights of stairs and mailed it in the post box." Over 100 years

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One of Lillian Wald's visiting nurses takes a shortcut on her rounds.

after she wrote them, Wald's affecting reports to Schiff give us vivid pictures of conditions in the Lower East Side slums. Unlike the stiffer style of her letters and *The House on Henry Street*, the tone of Wald's reports to Schiff is pithy and free, reflecting a woman happily immersed in a career central to her life, "called" to a great work. Schiff had agreed to support the nurses for at least six months; certainly Wald must have guessed that upon reading her reports he would be moved to continue his support well beyond that period.

"Meyer P., age 5 years, . . . injured his hip. He lay for 7 months in the Orthopedic Hospital . . . was discharged as incurable. . . . [T]he cripple is in pain and cries to be carried. . . . They [Meyer's family] had no rooms of their own but paid $3 a month to Hannah H . . . who

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At the Henry Street Settlement, children line up to see the nurse.

allowed the family to sleep on the floor." Upon Schiff's request, the Montefiore Home admitted Meyer. "We have found several cases of typhoid fever, and in every house succeeded in overcoming hospital prejudice, accompanying the patients to the hospital wards to satisfy their first uneasiness."

"Lily Klein very ill with pneumonia for whom we procured medical attention and nursed. The child died, but the night before Miss Brewster had remained with the child all night. . . . Father deserted and mother worn out."

"Visit and care of typhoid patient, 182 Ludlow Street."

"Visit to 7 Hester Street where in rooms of Nathan S. found two children with measles. After much argument succeeded in bathing these two patients and the sick baby. . . . Brought clean dresses to the older children."

"Four people slept in the unlighted room on rags, coats, etc."

"Gave tickets for Hebrew Sanitarium excursion . . . to Mrs. Schneider and 5 children . . . but five of the seven children are nearly naked. . . . So we will make their decent appearance possible."

"7 P.M. visit to Mrs. Lanowitz, took her flowers, clean bedding, made egg-nog and left her in nursing condition for the night."

"Mrs. Jacobson and her two children homeless, without work. We succeeded in placing her for a few weeks at the Children's Aid Society and found a place for the children while she worked."

"In a rear tenement, top floor, . . . a doctor found . . . Mrs.

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Weichert, crazy and ill with pneumonia and typhoid; [we] cared for her fourteen year old daughter. [Mrs. Weichert] died in a few days, I shall always be glad that the doctor told us in time so she was made human and decent."

"Many of these people have kept from begging and it is not uncommon to meet families, to whom not a dollar has come in seven months—the pawn shops telling the progress of their fall, beginning some months back with the pawning of a gold watch, ending with a woman's waist."

Mary Brewster's health soon broke down. She left the Lower East Side, married, and died while still young. Little more is known about her. But Wald, more robust, carried on, buoyed by the realization that she had found her true purpose in life.

Wald's work was exactly the kind of philanthropy that Schiff believed worthwhile. It was face-to-face, and it aimed at helping people to help themselves if they possibly could. "Charity and philanthropy to be effective," Schiff wrote in an 1893 memorandum, "... should have personal supervision, for it is unlikely that others can carry into practical effect our ideas and intentions as well as we can ourselves."

Just as he knew the details of all those railroads he successfully financed, so he insisted on knowing the truth about the many people or institutions that came to him for help. "If it was an individual," his biographer Cyrus Adler wrote, "he would either try some plan of self-help, or, if the person, by reason of bad health or age, was helpless, place him upon a sort of pension roll, which was kept absolutely private and confidential."

But he carefully supervised that private pension roll. In a letter of May 8, 1889, to a "trusted agent," he wrote: "I send you a list of parties who receive monthly checks from me. . . . I would be obliged if . . . you will have their continued worthiness to receive support reported to me." Schiff's philanthropy continually impresses by the personal, hands-on involvement of the man with the causes he aided, so different from the layers of bureaucracy and thickets of paperwork that characterize today's prominent philanthropic foundations.

The Henry Street Settlement, the institution that Wald founded to further her work in 1894, a year after she arrived on the Lower East Side, perfectly embodied her and Schiff's shared belief that, whenever possible, poor people should help themselves. With the demands for her nursing care sharply increased, and with other nurses volunteering to help her and Brewster, she decided to found the settlement house as an efficient center for her work and a way of extending her mission.

The Lower East Side had many settlement houses. Before moving into her Jefferson Street apartment, Wald had lived for two months in the College Settlement, and the settlement idea had influenced her when she decided on her mission in the slums. London's Toynbee Hall (opened in 1884) and Jane Addams's Hull House (founded in Chicago in 1889), provided the settlement house model, which the eminent historian Gertrude Himmelfarb succinctly characterizes in her description of Toynbee Hall: "It did not dispense relief or charity: it dispensed education, culture, and civic amenities. . . . [Settlement workers] were moralists on behalf of the poor, whom they sought to elevate morally, spiritually, culturally, . . . whom, moreover, they assumed to be capable of and desirous of such elevation."

Settlement founders were strikingly young—Wald was 27 when Henry Street opened, Addams 29 when she founded Hull House—and most settlement workers were youthful idealists who volunteered for a year or two. They established kindergartens, thus setting an example for school systems, and taught English and good citizenship to immigrant adults. Settlements campaigned to open schools during evenings to accommodate classes and children's clubs. They established vocational courses and offered music and art classes. Unsurprisingly, radicals who thought only a complete social revolution could solve the problems of the poor derided the settlements; the fiery Emma Goldman scornfully dismissed them as merely "teaching the

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poor to eat with a fork." But they did incalculable good.

Wald set out to combine all this with her nursing program. She turned to Schiff, who promptly put his hand and checkbook at her service. "I am now looking for a suitable home either in Henry Street or Madison Street," he wrote to Brewster, "which appears under the advice of Miss Wald . . . where the house should be . . . located." He soon bought the house at 265 Henry Street (destined to become world famous); Wald and Brewster moved in and named it "The Nurses' Settlement," which Wald amended a few years later to "The Henry Street Settlement."

Nursing formed the center of the settlement's mission. At Henry Street, mothers and children attended classes in home nursing, simple first aid, home hygiene, and child care. Above all, the new institution brought public health nursing to the Lower East Side's burgeoning immigrant population, assigning nine full-time nurses to cases in 1898, 15 in 1904, 27 in 1906. By the time Schiff delivered the celebratory address at the settlement's 20th anniversary in 1914, the institution deserved to celebrate. That year there were seven branches in New York City, seven fresh-air "vacation homes" in rural areas, milk stations dispensing milk to sick children, clinics, and a staff of 90 nurses visiting 200,000 families every year. Those who could pay a modest sum did so; the destitute received care without charge.

To elevate the neighborhood residents "morally, spiritually, and culturally," Wald soon moved into areas beyond nursing. Henry Street became a community center, offering clubs for children and adults, a library, and a backyard children's playground, the first of its kind in the country. When, with Schiff helping fund the purchases, the settlement added buildings at 299, 301, and 303 Henry Street, it also added classes in printmaking, carpentry, dressmaking, machine shop work, and other trades.

Although the creation of public health nursing was Wald's major achievement, for the rest of her life she threw herself into an astonishing array of causes. City government reform (in which Schiff was so active that some urged him to run for mayor), playgrounds for children, women's suffrage, the peace movement, lectures, arts classes, trade union and strikers' support, the launching of the Neighborhood Playhouse—this is only a partial list of her (and the settlement's) concerns. The NAACP evolved from meetings at Henry Street, at one of which Schiff made a fervent speech on behalf of the guest of honor, W. E. B. DuBois.

Wald was an archetypal activist, a moderate socialist of the Fabian stamp, who served on committees, organized, lectured, testified, wrote—always with good intentions, often with beneficent results. She helped mediate several rancorous strikes involving East Side residents, disputes in which she enlisted Schiff's influence to resolve. The Henry Street Settlement served as nonpartisan ground on which employers and labor met to settle sometimes bitter differences.

Though Schiff deplored what he termed "the union trusts" (his knowledge of certain ruthless railroad and coal mining unions perhaps influenced him), he supported the right of workers to organize and bargain for better conditions. It was, after all, another type of self-help. Biographer Cyrus Adler tells us: "His association with the Henry Street Settlement work and like efforts brought him into . . . personal contact with workingmen. . . . During one strike [probably the 1910 garment workers strike], conditions among the strikers' families were such that the Henry Street Settlement had to give urgent relief every day to many people. [Schiff] authorized the Settlement to do so on his behalf, and to keep an account of the amount expended. Every night he would send a check for the amount expended. At another time, when pickets were being arrested, he conveyed a piece of property to one of the members of the Settlement, to enable that person to give bail for the arrested strikers." Schiff helped settle the strike; Wald then served on the Joint Board of Sanitary Control overseeing the hygienic conditions in the shops. One wonders what Karl Marx would have made of arch-capitalist Jacob Schiff's basic decencies.

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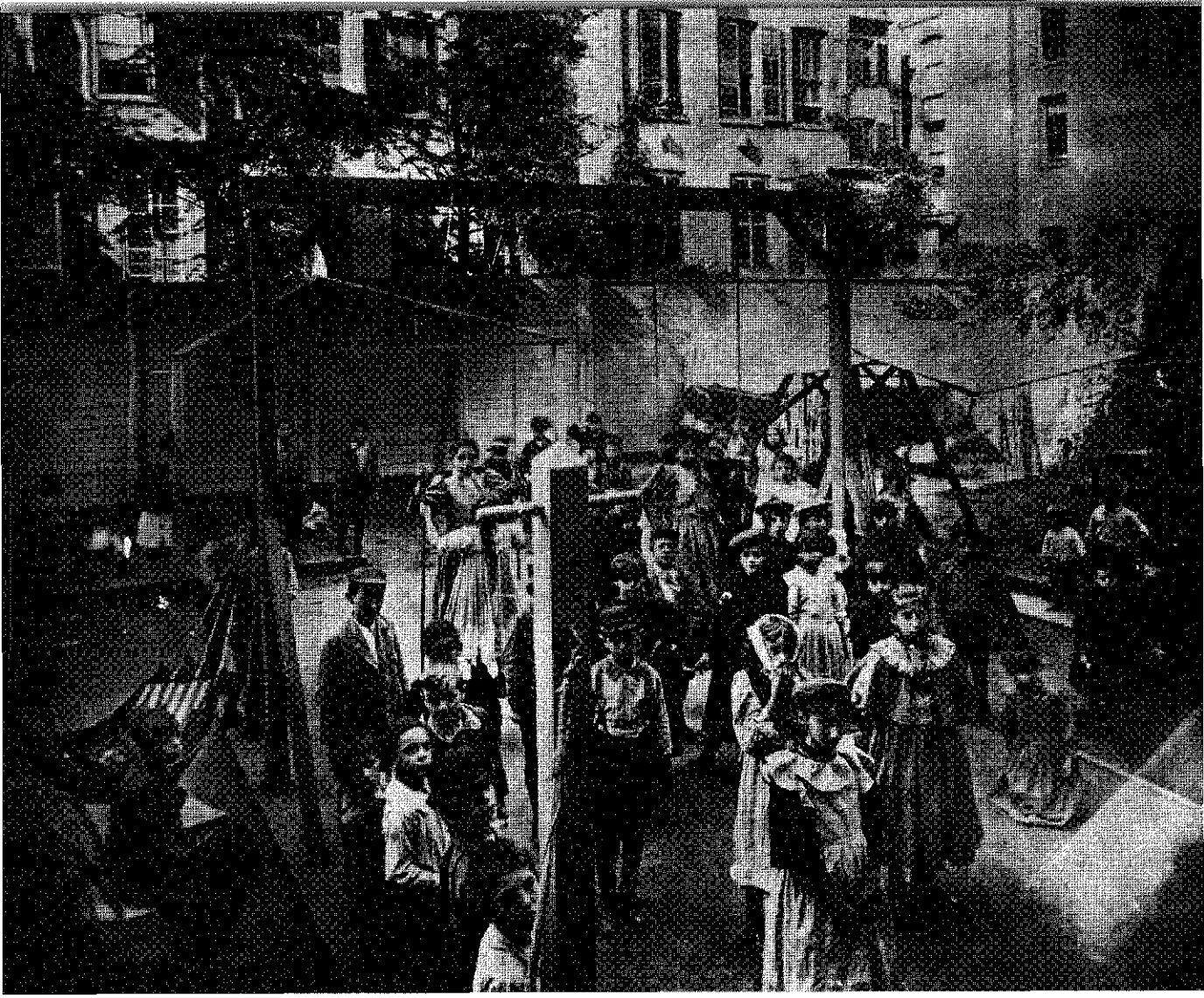

The Henry Street Settlement had the nation's first urban backyard playground.

As the years passed, Schiff's support of Wald and the settlement never flagged, though he sometimes disagreed with her. Would Schiff ask his lawyer, Mr. Cravath, to compose a letter to members of the bar, advising bequests to the settlement? He would and did. Should more money be invested in the Social Halls Association, which ran Clinton Hall, a "respectable" center for recreation, weddings, and parties? No, insisted the prudent banker; the settlement had invested "almost a quarter of a million, and after five or six years are not even able to earn sufficient . . . to pay interest on [the] debt." Ventures like the association, though well-intentioned, "have only a very qualified value unless they can be established on a business basis." When Schiff took possession of a golf course near his country place in Rumson, New Jersey, he informed Wald, "We hope to arrange a permanent excursion and playground for children's parties."

Schiff sent checks to the settlement for special needs: an additional night nurse willing to enter the dark slum buildings, an obstetrical nurse, increases in nurses' salaries. "[W]hatever you arrange, in conformity with our family's promises," Schiff wrote her, "will be satisfactory."

Schiff seems to have regarded the settlement as his extended family, as a household he was part of. "I cannot begin the New Year any better than . . . to somewhat increase your emergency fund," he wrote in 1911, enclosing a check. In 1912 Wald decided to set up an endowment fund for the long-range financial health of the settlement; she of course approached Schiff. "You and Mrs. Loeb were the first friends and believers in me, and you have always made me feel that you are a sharer in

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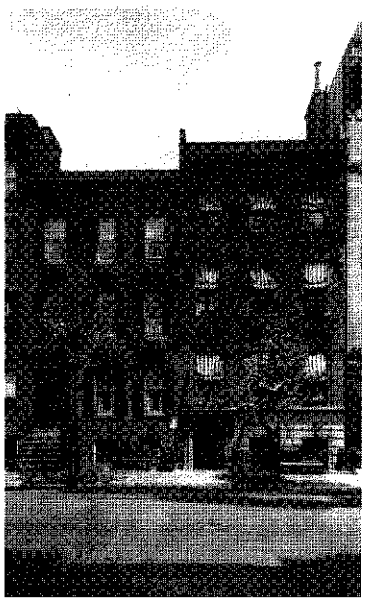
every aspiration that I had for the safe-guarding of children and care of our sick, as well as in all other things that you have encouraged in me." Would Schiff take the leadership in setting up the endowment? Of course he would.

Schiff insisted that Wald not reveal the extent of his crucial help, a request that might have been influenced by the Talmudic injunction that whoever gives secretly to the poor is blessed sixfold. Wald respected his wishes. In *The House on Henry Street*, Schiff's name doesn't appear, though until he died he was Wald's steadfast contributor, confidant, and advisor.

The extensive Schiff-Wald correspondence reflects the special fondness the world-famous banker and the innovative nurse and social worker had for each other. Schiff wrote to her often—from his office, from a ship on the way to Europe, while traveling in foreign countries, from his various vacation homes. "It was much of a delight to see your dear face once more," he wrote in 1909. "Mrs. Schiff and I are looking forward with much pleasure to dining with you and the family [at Henry Street]," he wrote in another 1909 message. "It was much of a pleasure to get a glance of you at luncheon yesterday, but please husband your strength . . . by not attempting to do too much," cautioned a 1912 letter.

Wald reciprocated Schiff's high regard. "My love to the dear lady [Mrs. Schiff] and to you," Wald signed a 1917 letter. In a long letter the same year, detailing critical public-health-nursing financial needs, Wald closed with, "I send a great deal of love to you and the dear lady." In another 1917 letter she requested, "Please let me know when you and the dear lady want me to come to the country? I am homesick for you both." And, again in that year, she thanked Schiff for a $3,500 check and ended "With loving appreciation of all that you are to me and us."



PAUL PARKER

An older Lillian Wald (left); an early photo of the Henry Street Settlement.

As Schiff moved into his seventies he became noticeably more weary. By 1920 he was suffering from a heart condition, then less responsive to treatment than today. On September 25, 1920, with his family at his bedside, he died in his home at 905 Fifth Avenue. His passing was front-page news in the *New York Times* and other newspapers. Schiff was mourned by his kin, by his extended Henry Street family, and by people who had never seen or met him but who venerated him for what he had done for those less fortunate.

On the death of her great friend and supporter, Wald, recalling the consequential day in 1893 when she first met Schiff, wrote of her good fortune to be able "to pour into his understanding ears the despair that an inexperienced girl felt [at seeing] the social conditions of people living in the crowded East Side of Manhattan. Immediately did this busy banker respond to the troubled visitor, and thereby started a fellowship in friendship and social interest that for all the years that followed never failed on his part."

Lillian Wald outlived her faithful patron and advisor by 20 years, throwing herself into an endless whirl of committees, meetings, speeches, and world travel to countries that praised and honored her. By the mid-1930s, ill and unable to continue her work, she retired to her country home in what was then rural Westport, Connecticut, and died there on September 1, 1940. She left behind an enduring monument, proof that with the right kind of help people can lift themselves out of poverty and ignorance through education and through their own striving. •

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Trash, Violence, and Versace: But Is It Art?

Theodore Dalrymple

The English are not, on the whole, interested in modern art or indeed art of any description. They can't tell a constructivist from an abstract expressionist and are content to remain in their ignorance. So it's surprising that for several weeks this fall an exhibition of modern British art at the Royal Academy of Art in London, called "Sensation," should have captured their attention and become the talking point of the day.

The exhibition embodied fully that quintessential characteristic of modern British culture: extreme vulgarity. Its celebration of this quality helped "Sensation" break all records for attendance at a modern art exhibition in London, with queues to get in stretching around the block, while a mile away, at the National Portrait Gallery, an exhibition of Sir Henry Raeburn's exquisite portraiture, elegant and psychologically profound, went almost unattended—a perfect symbolic enactment of our desire to jettison our past in favor of our brave and vacuous new present. Mr. Blair—he of the re-branding of Britain—must have been proud of us.

As the Marxists used to say in their days of respectability, *it was no accident* that the "Sensation" exhibition was a selection of works owned by the advertising magnate Charles Saatchi, or that an advertising magnate should be by far the most openhanded patron of modern British art. In an interview in the *Daily Telegraph*, Mr. Saatchi said that, as an advertising man, he was drawn to immediate visual impacts, and he thought that his taste would appeal to a generation of young Britons who had been brought up on advertisements. Quite so: but what I took as a confession of deep shallowness (if I may be allowed an apparently paradoxical expression), he took to be a commendation. We all make God in our own image.

The exhibition attracted unprecedented controversy at home and wide publicity abroad. Television cameras from around the world whirred at the press preview. As for the British press, it divided into two camps, the exhilarated and the disgusted. The exhilarated camp—composed of the self-appointed guardians of freedom of expression and artistic license—exulted that at last Britain, so long a provincial backwater, was now the mainstream of artistic innovation. Young British artists were in the vanguard, bravely battling the forces of artistic reaction: though no one specified the precise destination of the artistic army whose advance they were supposedly leading. The disgusted press camp, by contrast, bemoaned this further, almost definitive, degradation of taste. There is no such thing as bad publicity, however; indeed, in an age of perversity, bad publicity isn't bad—it's the best. "Filthy," "disgusting," "pornographic," "sordid," "perverted," "vicious": no words could have been better calculated to attract the British to the Royal Academy.

Much of the original controversy surrounded a portrait of Myra Hindley. Should it have been shown in public or not?

The name Myra Hindley still stirs the deepest passions in Britain. In 1965 she received a life sentence for the murder of several small children, whom, in conjunction with her lover, Ian Brady, she tortured to death in pursuance of an absurd "pagan" ritual Brady dreamed up. They killed them in Manchester and buried them on the Yorkshire moors.

A tape recording they made while they tortured one of their young victims was played in court and seemed to usher in a new age of British brutishness. George Orwell had already lamented the decline of the English murder, of course, from its Victorian heyday of arsenic and strychnine, when it seemed to possess a certain Byzantine elegance; but this was something new, a fault line in the culture that had opened up to reveal an abyss. Here, for the first time, was multiple murder as self-expression, as self-indulgence, as recreation.

Ever since her conviction, Myra Hindley has divided British opinion into a small liberal

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camp, which calls regularly for her release, and a large conservative one, calling for her perpetual incarceration (unlike Hindley, Brady has never demanded release). The liberals say that she was young at the time of her offenses, being not yet 20, that she was in psychological thrall to her lover, that she has since repented her crimes, and that she constitutes no further danger to children. The conservatives say that everyone knows well before the age of 20 that torturing children to death is wrong; that Hindley committed her crimes over a period of two years, so that they sprang from no sudden rush of blood to the head; that by doing so she put herself beyond the pale of normal human society once and for all; and that her repentance was, and is, bogus, inasmuch as she failed for more than 20 years to admit that she knew anything about the disappearance of two other children from Manchester whose bodies were not found, but of whose murders she and Brady were certainly guilty.

The police mug shot taken at the time of her arrest has since become one of the most instantly recognizable photographic images in Britain. No newspaper in the country has not reproduced it countless times. She appears agelessly as a square-jawed, peroxided blonde, staring emotionlessly into the camera, the personification of heartless evil. It is this image that an artist called Marcus Harvey chose to magnify to the gigantic proportions of 13 feet by 10 (and Charles Saatchi chose to buy), the artist compounding the insult—in the eyes of the picture's detractors—by using the handprint of a small child in place of the dots by which the photograph is built up in newspaper reproductions of it.

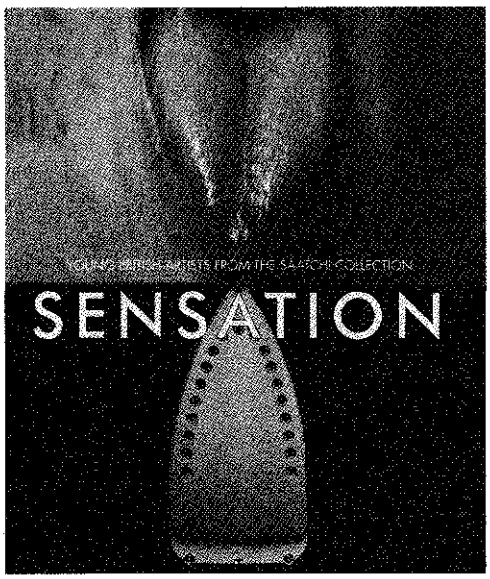

IMAGE COURTESY THE SAATCHI COLLECTION

The catalog cover for the Saatchi Collection.

The impact of the picture is enormous, especially on those who recognize Hindley instantaneously, as 99 percent of the British population does. Within the first few days of its exhibition, a spectator threw ink at it, after which it was removed, cleaned, and returned with a protective transparent sheet before it. (Naturally enough, the artistic fraternity took the attack as a tribute to the power of art: for no one attacks what is of no importance to him.) Outside the academy's entrance, by the statue of its great and civilized first president, Sir Joshua Reynolds, mothers of murdered children, including some Myra Hindley murdered, implored the public not to enter. Members of MAMAA (Mothers Against Murder and Aggression), an organization the mothers founded, handed out a heartfelt photocopied plea from the mother of one of the missing children with whose murder neither Hindley nor Brady was ever charged, though they were almost certainly guilty of it.

"Myself and the parents of the other victims," it reads, "have had to live for over thirty years knowing that our children died a terrible death at the hands of that evil pair. Hindley is due to have her case heard at the [European] Court of Human Rights. What about our rights? There is no such thing as a normal life after your child has been murdered. We live a life sentence too but there is no appeal or reprieve for us, our suffering goes on and on and is only made worse every time something like this comes up. We are the forgotten victims. Hindley has never been charged with the murder of my Keith .... I would like to take out a private prosecution but I cannot afford it and cannot get Legal Aid. I still do not know where my son is and all I want is to have him home and give him a decent burial."

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The raw sincerity of this appeal cries to heaven and is in marked contrast to the simpering prose of the academy's catalog and press releases, which talk, among other things, of the exhibiting artists' concern about the unjust British class system and of their deep sympathies for and with the working class. But the only members of the working class to visit, or to express an opinion of, the exhibition were precisely the Mothers Against Murder and Aggression, who called unequivocally for the destruction of the painting and the closure of the whole show. It goes without saying that the artists sympathized not with the actual working classes but with their own idea of the working classes, rather as Marie Antoinette wished to live not as a real shepherdess but as her romanticized conception of a shepherdess.

The member of MAMAA to whom I spoke said that Marcus Harvey would never have painted Myra Hindley had she not murdered her child and others. She objected strongly to the transformation of the murderer of her child into an icon to titillate the public for a moment or two, before it moved on to its next, equally momentary, preoccupation or amusement.

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with painting a murderer, even one as depraved as Hindley. But there was undoubtedly something profoundly distasteful about the public display of the painting in this exhibition. The very title of the exhibition as a whole suggested titillation or voyeurism; and this is how the catalog describes the work of Marcus Harvey, two of whose other paintings, both of nude women, were also exhibited, one of them leeringly entitled, *Dudley, Like What You See? Then Call Me*: "Marcus Harvey makes disquieting, tension-filled paintings that simultaneously contain and exceed their salacious imagery. Through the superimposition of pornographic female nudes on to a wildly expressionistic ground, form and content resist and comply with each other uneasily." What is a working-class mother from Manchester, who has had her child expressionistically, salaciously, and pornographically murdered, supposed to make of this?

I asked the Royal Academy's chief of exhibitions, Norman Rosenthal. A man much reviled by some academicians (a few of whom resigned from the academy over the exhibition), he is clearly very good at his job. Somewhat grubby and unwashed, he has the charismatic capacity to antagonize at 100 yards; and when he speaks—hundreds of words to the minute—one feels one is listening to Mephistopheles.

"All art is moral," he said. "Anything that is immoral is not art."

There is no such thing, wrote Oscar Wilde, as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. Presumably, then, *Mein Kampf* would have been all right had it been better written.

"The picture raises interesting questions," continued Rosenthal.

"What interesting questions does it raise?" I asked. "Because it must be possible to formulate them in words."

"It raises a question, for instance, about the exploitation of children in our society," said Rosenthal.

"Some might say that the use of a child's palm to produce a picture of a child murderer, when the child could not possibly appreciate the significance of the use to which its palm was being put, was itself a form of exploitation," I replied.

"If so, it is very minor by comparison with what goes on in the rest of society."

"But why must we judge everything by the lowest possible standard?" I asked.

Rosenthal simply couldn't see what the mothers were objecting to. It seems that a life spent in the cultivation of the plastic arts can desiccate a man to the point where he has little sympathy with people whose existence is on a less rarefied plane.

The Hindley picture was far from the only work of art at the exhibition to arouse comment. Indeed, at the exhibition's entrance a notice proclaimed: "There are works of

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art on display . . . which some people may find distasteful. Parents should exercise their judgment in bringing their children to the exhibition. One gallery will not be open to those under the age of 18." The academy had, in fact, retained an eminent lawyer to advise on which works to withhold from the prurient gaze of youth—more from a fear of prosecution, doubtless, than from a fear of corrupting the young. In the event, a visit from the vice squad of London's Metropolitan Police passed off without mishap: the boys in blue found nothing to object to in the newly refurbished galleries and left without arresting anyone.

Indeed, the eminent lawyer's choice of works to set aside from the young was highly idiosyncratic. One entered the adults-only gallery through a screen arrangement like those in every adult bookshop in every seedy urban area of England. The principal proscribed work was a fiberglass sculpture of several conjoined girls, some with anuses for mouths and semi-erect penises for noses, all naked except for sneakers on their feet, entitled *Zygotic acceleration, biogenetic, de-sublimated libidinal model*. I could understand why the academy's lawyer had thought children should not see it.

But on the wall was also a totally innocuous—indeed, vacuous—painting of a young man recumbent in his room, listening to his Walkman. Try as I might, I could think of no reason (other than aesthetic) that children should be prevented from seeing it. The only explanation I could think of for this strange sequestration of both the pornographic and the innocuous was that the lawyer was trying to subvert the very idea of protecting children from pornography by making it appear ridiculous: which, in a sense, it was, since any child could have bought the catalog, with its no-obscenity-spared pictures of all the exhibits.

IMAGE COURTESY THE SAATCHI COLLECTION

A portrait of child-killer Myra Hindley.

In any case, the part of the show open to children of all ages contained vastly more disturbing exhibits. But for the new art criticism, "disturbing" is an automatic term of approbation. "It has always been the job of artists to conquer territory that has been taboo," writes Norman Rosenthal in his grossly disingenuous essay, ambiguously entitled "The Blood Must Continue to Flow," which introduces the catalog. It would be difficult to formulate a less truthful, more willfully distorted summary of art history, of which a small part—and by no means the most glorious—is mistaken for the whole, that the unjustifiable may be justified.

"Artists must continue the conquest of new territory and new taboos," Rosenthal continues, in prescriptivist mood. He admits no other purpose of art: to break taboos is thus not a possible function of art but its only function. Small wonder, then, that if all art is the breaking of taboos, all breaking of taboos soon comes to be regarded as art.

Of course, he doesn't really mean what he says; but then, for intellectuals like him, words are not to express propositions or truth but to distinguish the writer socially from the common herd, too artistically unenlightened and unsophisticated to advocate the abandonment of all restraint and standards. It is unlikely, however, that even Rosenthal would find, say, a

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video of young hooligans raping his sister (to invoke Oscar Wilde again) to be merely the conquest of new territory and taboo. Thus, while he may not actually mean what he says, his promotion of this idea in the current exhibition will return to haunt not only him but the rest of society. For why should artists alone be permitted to break taboos? Why not the rest of us? A taboo exists only if it is a taboo for everyone: and what is broken symbolically in art will soon enough be broken in reality.

That civilized life cannot be lived without taboos—that some of them may indeed be justified, and that therefore taboo is not in itself an evil to be vanquished—is a thought too subtle for the aesthetes of nihilism. How ironic that a high official of the Royal Academy should have espoused this destructive doctrine, when the academy's first president, a greater and better man by far, wrote in his *Seventh Discourse on Art*: "A man who thinks he is guarding himself against prejudices [by which he means inherited moral standards and taboos] by resisting the authority of others, leaves open every avenue to singularity, vanity, self-conceit, obstinacy, and many other vices, all tending to warp the judgment." As Sir Joshua also pointed out—in urbane, witty, and civilized prose, of a kind impossible to imagine Norman Rosenthal writing—the intelligent and wise man examines his prejudices, not to reject them all because they are prejudices but to see which should be retained and which not.

I was less taken aback by the main exhibition than many because its atmosphere was oddly familiar to me. It transported me back to my days as a medical student: to the dissection room, the pathology museum, and the mortuary. For there were on display flayed corpses, sliced animals in formalin, a close-up photograph of a gunshot wound to the scalp, and even a work called *Dead Dad*, a scaled-down but hyperrealistic model in silicone and acrylic of a naked corpse. As the non-medical visitors to the exhibition walked around, I recalled my student days, when my non-medical-student friends would go through my pathology texts in fascinated horror, turning over the pages half in fear and half in hope of finding something worse overleaf.

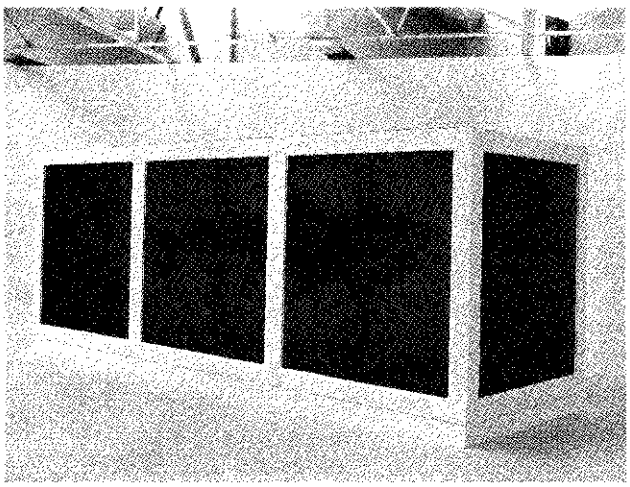

IMAGE COURTESY THE SAATCHI COLLECTION

Damien Hirst's tiger shark in formaldehyde.

I listened to the sculptor of *Dead Dad* give an interview to a European television station while he crouched by the shrunken corpse of his own creation, a huge technical advance over the head-shrinkers of New Guinea. "Nothing in this exhibition offends my sensibility," he said, in a tone of evident self-satisfaction. What he omitted to mention, of course, was that modern sophistication demands a sensibility that nothing can offend or even surprise, that is ironclad against shock or moral objection. To be a man of artistic taste now requires that you have no standards at all to be violated: which, as Ortega y Gasset said, is the beginning of barbarism.

I asked the sculptor whether *Dead Dad* was his own father, and of course it was. He clearly regarded the sculpture as a work of filial piety, but it was precisely his sincerity in doing so that appalled me. If he had said that he had made his sculpture to exact revenge upon his father, who had led him a terrible life in his childhood, and who had abused him physically and sexually when he was six years old, his motives in producing it would at least have been clear. When respect, hatred, love,

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loathing, and contempt can call forth the same artistic product, then our sensibility, our power of discrimination, has been eroded out of existence. When filial piety displays a father's unclothed corpse, down to the last pubic hair, to the idle gaze of hundreds of thousands of strangers, then honoring one's father and one's mother becomes indistinguishable from dishonoring them.

A flippantly intellectualized coarseness is the hallmark of the exhibition, as it is of most modern British culture. The titles of many of the exhibits display this. Damien Hirst—he of the sliced cows and pigs, the bottled sheep and sharks—is a painter as well as a bottler of dead animals. He titles one of his two paintings in the exhibition *beautiful, kiss my fucking ass painting*. A canvas by Gary Hume bears the title *Begging for It*, where It, of course, can mean only one thing. Sarah Lucas calls her exhibit *Sod You Gits*. A painting by Chris Ofili, an artist of Nigerian extraction born in England, is entitled *Spaceshit*. According to the brief account of his life in the catalog, "It was in Zimbabwe that Ofili experienced what some might call 'a moment of clarity'—struck by the limits of his paintings, and in an effort to ground them physically in a cultural as well as natural landscape, he hit upon the idea of sticking elephant shit on them." This was evidently a commercial success. "Soon after, in 1993, Ofili held two Shit Sales, one in Berlin and the other in . . . London, exhibiting several balls of elephant shit in the context of the market." The notes prepared by the academy for schoolteachers who bring their pupils to the exhibition suggest that the teacher discuss with the pupils how a conservator might react to deterioration in the dung of Ofili's pictures, though an answer is suggested by the information that, where he once used only free-range elephant excrement from the African bush, comparatively difficult of access, he now uses the cultivated variety from the London Zoo.

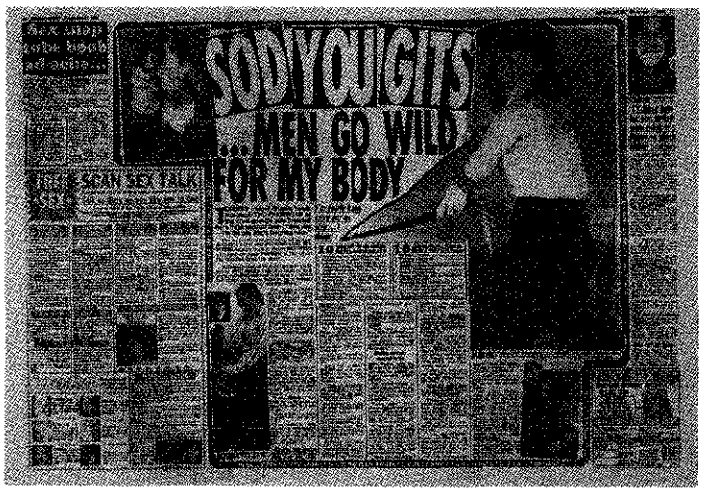

IMAGE COURTESY THE SAATCHI COLLECTION

"Sod You Gits," photocopy on paper by Sarah Lucas.

A work by Peter Davies called *Text Painting* consists of 6½ by 7 feet of childish multi-colored lettering (not joined up), from whose unutterably contemptible text the following is but a selection: "Art I like is . . . Bruce Nash and all that aggressive white male stuff, Mike Kolley he does everything so trashy but we love it . . . Picasso he just did whatever the fuck he wanted . . . Lily Van der Stoker Mutha Fucka . . . Antony Caro now he really is one mean badass M.F. S.O.B., Velasquez he's Versace for art lovers . . . Matisse he had no problem with some fucker telling him his work looked decorative . . . Charles Ray like a fucking spoilt brat with his giant dolls + trucks . . ." etc. etc., *ad nauseam*.

Trash, violence, and Versace: a fair summary of the aesthetic of the exhibition.

The coarseness runs through not just the titles or even the subject matter of the exhibits but through every aspect of the show. Even the photographs of the artists in the catalog depict them as members of the underclass. Damien Hirst, for example, takes care to present himself as indistinguishable in appearance from the average British football hooligan. Sheer financial necessity cannot explain this, since many of the artists are by now extremely rich. They appear dirty and disheveled because they want to, because it appears to them virtuous to do so.

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The artists are said to evince an interest in, indeed a fascination with, *punk* and *grunge*—the deliberate adoption of ugliness and bad taste that characterizes British popular culture. There is nothing wrong with an artistic interest in demotic coarseness and the underside of common life, of course: this is, after all, the land of Hogarth and Rowlandson. But those great artists remained aloof from the phenomena they were depicting and criticized them even as they laughed at them. They combined social commentary with humor and aesthetic grace. They had both an aesthetic and a moral standpoint (without which satire is impossible) and would have deplored the deep aesthetic and moral nihilism of the current exhibition. They would have been puzzled and appalled by the automatic equation of morality with narrow-mindedness and bigotry, so evident in Norman Rosenthal's essay. And when Hogarth and Rowlandson depicted the ugly, as they did frequently, they did so by comparison with an implicit standard of beauty, embodied in the very elegance of their execution.

The artists of "Sensation," however, have not so much expressed an interest in punk and grunge as surrendered to them. With Milton's Satan, they have exclaimed, "Evil, be thou my good"; and they have added, "Ugliness, be thou my beauty."

They are not alone in this, of course. Surrender on all fronts is the order of the day. Recently the Midland Bank announced that it was withdrawing its $1.6 million subsidy of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, because it was an elitist institution; instead, to prove that it was a democratic, caring bank, it would use the money to fund a pop music festival, which most of its customers would find "sexier." The cultural surrender of the better to the worse goes further and deeper. Recently, too, *The Lancet*, one of the world's two most important medical journals, carried a brief interview with Professor Sir Raymond Hoffenberg, former president of the Royal College of Physicians (in existence since the reign of Henry VIII). He was asked for his favorite word—itself a fatuous question, worthy of a women's-magazine interview with a soap-opera starlet—and he replied, "arsehole." Would any president of that august institution proudly have used such a word in public until the last few years?

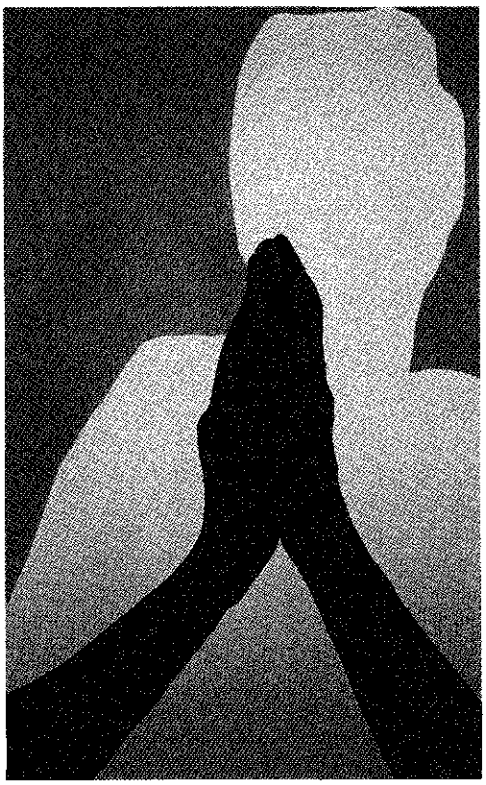

IMAGE COURTESY THE SAATCHI COLLECTION

"Begging for It," by Gary Hume.

What accounts for this extraordinary, and very rapid, coarsening of British culture, of which the "Sensation" exhibition is such a striking instance?

The coarsening is international, alas: Damien Hirst is celebrated wherever people have tens of thousands to spend on sliced and bottled animals. The same meretriciousness, the same overvaluation of the same Sensationalism, rules everywhere. The romantic conceit that originality is an artistic virtue in itself is everywhere accepted uncritically: which is why an artist called Marc Quinn, a Cambridge graduate, can be praised for withdrawing eight pints of his own blood over several months, freezing and storing it, and then using it to sculpt a permanently refrigerated self-portrait. It is good and worthwhile because no one has ever done such a thing before. When

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Damien Hirst was taxed with the fact that anybody could bottle a sheep in formalin, he replied, "But no one did it before, did they?" And if originality necessitates coarseness, then so be it.

The authentic man, in the romantic conception, is he who has cut himself free of all convention, who acknowledges no restriction on the free exercise of his will. This applies as much to morals as to aesthetics: and artistic genius becomes synonymous with waywardness. But a being as dependent on his cultural inheritance as man cannot escape convention so easily: and the desire to do so has itself become a cliché. Thus, for all its crudity and coarseness, "Sensation" is deeply conventional, but it obeys a wicked and socially destructive convention.

The crudity of which I complain results from the poisonous combination of an ideologically inspired (and therefore insincere) admiration for all that is demotic, on the one hand, and intellectual snobbery, on the other. In a democratic age, *vox populi, vox dei*: the multitude can do no wrong; and to suggest that there is or ought to be cultural activity from which large numbers of people might be excluded by virtue of their lack of mental cultivation is deemed elitist and, by definition, reprehensible. Coarseness is the tribute that intellectuals pay, if not to the proletariat exactly, then to their own schematic, inaccurate, and condescending idea of the proletariat. Intellectuals prove the purity of their political sentiment by the foulness of their productions.

As for snobbery, the intellectual raises himself above ordinary folk—who still cling quixotically to standards, prejudices, and taboos—by his thorough rejection of them. Unlike others, he is not a prisoner of his upbringing and cultural inheritance; and thus he proves the freedom of his spirit by the amorality of his conceptions.

Not surprisingly, artists in this mental atmosphere feel obliged to dwell only upon the visually revolting: for how else, in a world of violence, injustice, and squalor, does one prove one's democratic *bona fides* than by dwelling on the violent, the unjust, and the squalid? Any return to the conventionally beautiful would be an elitist evasion, and therefore:

> *Come let us mock at the great*
> *That had such burdens on the mind*
> *And toiled so hard and late*
> *To leave some monument behind,*
> *Nor thought of the levelling wind.*

Among those great, of course, was Sir Joshua Reynolds, president of the Royal Academy, friend and confidante of Edmund Burke, of Oliver Goldsmith, of Edward Gibbon, of David Garrick, of James Boswell (who dedicated his *Life of Johnson* to him), and of Doctor Johnson himself, who said of Reynolds that he was "the man with whom if you should quarrel, you should find the most difficulty how to abuse." What would he have made of these young artists who, *inter alia*, have abused the Royal Academy itself in the coarsest and most vulgar language, these young barbarians who think that art, like the sexual intercourse of Larkin's famous poem, began in 1963? In the first *Discourse* (and with what relief one turns to his elegant way of expressing himself without the aid of a single expletive, as one takes a shower after immersion in dirt) Reynolds wrote: "But young men have not only this frivolous ambition of being thought masters of execution, inciting them on the one hand, but also their natural sloth tempting them on the other. They are terrified at the prospect before them, of the toil required to attain exactness. The impetuosity of youth is disgusted at the slow approaches of a regular siege, and desires, from mere impatience of labour, to take the citadel by storm. They wish to find some shorter path to excellence, and hope to obtain the reward of eminence by other means, than those which the indispensable rules of art have prescribed."

Yes; but what kind of culture is it that confers the reward of eminence on those who use self-advertisement and vulgarity, mere Sensation, as their means to obtain it?

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Oh, to be in **England**

Poetry and Self-Pity

Theodore Dalrymple

CULVER PICTURES

The English are a nation of poets. I am not speaking now of Keats or of Milton but of millions of my contemporaries. Surveys have established that three-quarters of the English now living have written poetry at some time, usually during adolescence. The same surveys have established that (increasingly) the English can hardly read, cannot spell or do arithmetic, and know nothing of their own history; but they do not let mere ignorance get in the way of self-expression.

Little wonder that much of what they write has little merit from the purely literary point of view. But that does not mean that it is without interest or that it does not reveal something about the national soul. If the way a man dresses tells you something about him, won't his poetry do so also—however tasteless or garish it may be?

For the vast majority, writing poetry is like chicken pox: once you've gone through it, you're immune for life. But, like the chicken pox virus, which can lie dormant in the body to erupt again in the form of shingles several decades later, usually at a time of bodily or mental stress, so the poetic muse can revive in exceptional circumstances—such as incarceration. The medical records of a significant minority of prisoners contain copies of poems they have written while in jail.

Do you know, what it's like
to be lonely,
being just one, being the only?
Do you realy care,
that there's no one out there?
Do you realy mind,
or are you just blind?
Am I all by myself
Left to rot on the shelf?
Who am I in here,
Left on my own, I fear?
Is there plenty of ways
to end these long lonely days?
Does it really matter
if my mind begins to shatter?
All of these questions, but why,
am I put in here, and left
to die?

Actually, there was quite a good reason. The author of these lines, aged 29, had been found guilty of kidnapping a 12-year-old girl, whom he had repeatedly raped over the three days he held her captive. Nor was it his first such offense. He nevertheless concluded his poem with a reflection on the nature of friendship:

What is the meaning of a
true friend?
is it to whom you can really
depend?
But it all becomes clear
in the end,
that everyone around me
are just pretend.

Murder also has its poetry, usually taking the form of lines addressed to the dear departed. Not a few murderers turn to verse; among them, for example, is Tracie Andrews, who stabbed her boyfriend, Lee Harvey, 37 times. She made up a story that a vicious passer-by did it, and went on television to appeal for witnesses. She penned these lines in court and somehow let them fall into the hands of a reporter from a paper with a circulation of 3 million:

Goodbye my Love
God bless you my Sweetheart
My love is so deep
In my thoughts are you I
keep . . .
One day I'll be with you, the
jigsaw complete
'Tracie and Lee'
United in peace.

Though union in peace with the murdered one is a common conceit of lines written after a killing, reconciliation with the victim is rarely the subject of other prison poetry. As

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Wordsworth said, poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; and the most powerful feeling that overflows spontaneously in most prison poetry is self-pity. Few indeed are those so lacking in compassion that they do not feel sorry for themselves, and in some cases self-pity becomes strident or militant. Here, for example, is a poem, entitled "Hustler," written by a convicted black robber, published in the magazine of the prison in which I work:

I rob,
I steal,
I con,
I deal,
I am a hustler.
Why?
Because I can't
get a job.
Why?
Because of the
colour of my skin.
Why?
I didn't ask to
come here,
No, it was forced
on me.
My forefathers
were brought here
as slaves.
What to do?
I rob,
I steal,
I con,
I deal,
To survive where
I don't belong.

This is not so much Wordsworth's emotion recollected in tranquillity as special-pleading provoked by captivity. The version of history it contains is, of course, false and confused—but not from mere ignorance. The writer's forefathers were not brought to England as slaves; in all probability, his father emigrated to England from the West Indies in an attempt to better his economic prospects. His physical survival does not in the least depend upon his street robberies: he does not rob in order to eat but to procure consumer goods for which he would otherwise have to work and save. Moreover, if it truly were the color of his skin alone that necessitated his criminal activity, he would in effect be saying something that even the most flagrant racist would shrink from claiming: that all blacks are, *ipso facto*, criminals.

What we encounter in his poem, in fact, is an internalization of decades of liberal ideology, which the writer then uses to rationalize his clear intention to repeat his crimes. According to liberals, crime is the result of poverty, and black poverty is the result of racism, as night and day are the result of the earth's rotation. No conscious human decision or thought intervenes between the forcible transportation from Africa to Jamaica of the poet's great-great-great-great-great-grandfather and the snatching of an old lady's purse in the back streets of my city. The latter is no more than the natural consequence of the former. Thus the concept of personal responsibility for one's actions vanishes; and thus a man can continue to commit the most dreadful acts secure in his self-righteousness.

This poem, far from being a product of self-examination, is a product of self-deception, the maintenance of which is precisely its psychological purpose and function. As every child who has done wrong knows, if you protest your innocence loudly and vehemently enough, you come to believe in it yourself.

The poem also bears witness to what the eminent British historian Norman Cohn wrote in the preface to a new edition of his study of the forgery of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*: "[I]t is a great mistake to suppose that the only writers who matter are those whom the educated in their saner moments can take seriously. There exists a subterranean world where pathological fantasies disguised as ideas are churned out by crooks and half-educated fanatics for the benefit of the ignorant and superstitious."

Such a subterranean world exists indeed, and not only in the prison. It isn't only prisoners, after all, who feel the need to deceive themselves. Man is a self-deceiving animal; I have bad faith, therefore I am, one might almost say. Since amateur writers outnumber professionals by 100 to 1—at the very least—their productions are a better guide, statistically speaking, to the travails of the modern soul than the more readily accessible output of their professional confreres. Throughout every city you'll find writers' groups, where the disgruntled gather to express their rage in mimeographed print, aiming to

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disguise the source of unhappiness from themselves. Every dissatisfaction calls forth its own group, it seems: thus there is even a writers' group for socialist transvestites.

To be sure, the connection between socialism and transvestism may not at first be obvious. But many (even relatively conventional) people are inclined to ascribe their purely private woes to social causes in order to distance themselves from their own unhappiness, and to persuade themselves that the fault lies not within them but out in the world, and that therefore happiness is but a social reform or two away. The transvestites argued that it was not their sexual conduct in itself that made them unhappy but society's reaction to it; change society, and all would be well. Since the society in which they were unhappy, or at any rate dissatisfied, was a capitalist one, it followed that its opposite, a socialist one, would agree with them more.

The transvestite writers were angry: they believed themselves ill-used by an intolerant society. They believed that it was the transvestite content of their poetry that alone precluded its publication by the anti-transvestite mainline publishers (there is no one as paranoid as an unpublished poet). Anger is the handmaiden of self-righteousness, of course, and self-righteousness the mother of much declamation. One of the transvestite poets, a schoolteacher, read out his poem entitled "There Are As Many Sexes As People," outrage vying with complacency for mastery of his tone:

My sex
Isn't narrow or one-eyed
Like a fist to the jaw
Doesn't slam the door
Or jump into the driving seat
My sex
Isn't cold and cod in a suit
Doesn't stamp on the
accelerator
Or aim with a gun . . .
My sex
Is like a child inside . . .

The transvestite poet isn't claiming mere equality with people of more normal sexual proclivities: he is claiming superiority to them. The world, he implies, would be a better, more peaceful place if there were more transvestites. Fists to the jaw would be fewer; fatal road accidents due to aggressive acceleration would dwindle.

As to the unjust discrimination from which he claimed to have suffered, it consisted of nothing more than the need to conceal his nocturnal activities from the school authorities. He had never been arrested, charged, convicted—or even reviled—for wearing women's clothes at night.

But why, I asked, did he want to reveal his secret desires to his employers? Which of us wants to reveal everything about himself to anyone, let alone his boss? Did not tolerance entail a certain reticence on the part of those who wish to be tolerated?

I was missing the point, he replied. A man's sexual desire was not under his own control, so he should not be criticized for it. A tolerant society would allow him to cross-dress any time he liked—in front of his class, if he so wished. In fact, a tolerant society would encourage him to do so, that children might learn about the multiplicity of human desire. A tolerant society would not force a man to live a lie, as he had lived, or to conceal his innermost desires, as he had concealed them. It would accept his personality whole.

Eventually, he said, he had been able to contain himself no longer, and had felt obliged—duty-bound, in fact—to go public. He had told his local newspaper that "I am simply a man who likes to dress up as a woman." The indifference that greeted this revelation was for him an example of what the late Herbert Marcuse called "repressive tolerance." And so he had taken to writing a column called "Confronting Self-Denial" in a small socialist theoretical monthly. Self-denial, he seemed to think, was a hydra-headed monster that needed to be slain: the failure to recognize and embrace one's true nature led to all manner of psychological problems; the refusal of legitimate pleasure was a waste of opportunity. Far from being a precondition of civilized existence, self-denial—in both its meanings—was the principal cause of human misery.

Since utopian socialists can hardly hope any longer to combat the top-hatted plutocrats of early Soviet propaganda posters,

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their last hope of overthrowing the social order that they imagine has caused them so much suffering lies in attacking the remaining barriers to self-indulgence. In the new society brought about by the absence of limits to personal conduct, there will be no personal suffering.

The transvestite poet's brand of anger—at once dishonest, superficial, and intense—marks several other of the city's writing groups, which constitute themselves according to an extra-literary sense of grievance. There are women writers' groups, lesbian writers' groups, black women writers' groups ("We are twice slaves,/ The slaves of slaves"), Indian women writers' groups, and even a disabled writers' group ("You think we cannot think like you/ Because we cannot walk like you"). Writing and reading are not attempts to grasp imaginatively the complexity of the world, to tease out moral ambiguities, or to enter the experience of others, but a primitive tribal ritual of solidarity, a raising of the drawbridges against the hostile aliens who do not share one defining attribute or another.

Our bookshops precisely mirror this balkanization of literary endeavor, with their black writing sections, gay and lesbian writing sections, women's writing sections, and so forth. You do not read to broaden your outlook or your sympathies but to *maintain your rage*—to quote Gough Whitlam's advice to his supporters, after he had been dismissed as prime minister of Australia. For in an era of victimhood, when even the most privileged feel themselves hard done by, rage is automatically deemed a generous and justified emotion, no matter what the special pleading upon which it is founded.

But not all amateur writers form themselves into groupuscules, like nineteenth-century Russian revolutionaries. Some toil in less than splendid isolation. They appear to maintain their rage successfully nonetheless. Indeed, today's official guardians of literature take that sense of grievance as literature's defining characteristic, though sometimes they throw over the raw anger some of the decent drapery of political correctness.

For example, in the city's central public library is a Poetry Corner—placed next to the ecological display entitled The Earth Fights Back, (principally, it seems, against the multinationals). The good citizens of the city who write are here encouraged to expose one another to their emotion recollected in tranquillity: provided, of course, that such emotion does not in any way conflict with what the City Council—the elected representatives of the People, after all—think it ought to be. "We reserve the right," says an official notice at Poetry Corner, "not to display poems which do not comply with the City Council's Equal Opportunities Policy."

What does Equal Opportunities mean, as applied to literature? A clue appears in a pamphlet explaining the library's book acquisition policy. Since for financial reasons it can't buy all the books that are published (100,000 per year in the United Kingdom alone), it must confine itself to the purchase of good books only: and one of the main criteria of merit in a book, the pamphlet explains, is whether "all cultures and lifestyles [are] portrayed positively."

The word "all" is here used in a severely technical sense: it doesn't mean "each and every." No one should expect that the "lifestyles" of a neo-Nazi, a billionaire currency trader, or even an old-fashioned teacher of classics would be sympathetically portrayed as a consequence of the Equal Opportunities Policy. "All" in this context means something akin to what is meant in India by the Scheduled Castes and Tribes: but instead of untouchables we have single parents, drug addicts, selected ethnic and religious minorities (not Chinese, Jews, or Jehovah's Witnesses, who are assumed to look after themselves), homosexuals, and all those who, in one manner or another, feel aggrieved by the traditional bourgeois code of conduct and rebel against it.

On the other hand, Equal Opportunities as applied to literature means that Poetry Corner makes no attempt to discriminate between good and bad on purely literary grounds—or to impose bourgeois orthography on the citizenry. How else would such lines such as: "The meaning of life is a puzzel to us all" or "Love of a tender hart should be encoraged not lent" ever have seen the light of day?

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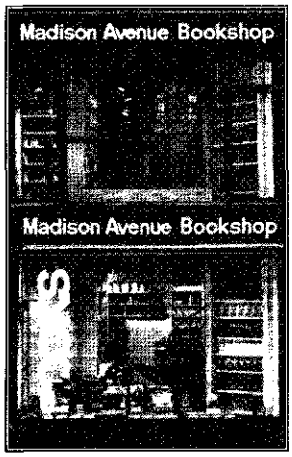

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This indifference to both the orthographical aspect of writing and its literary quality is hardly unique to my benighted city's council, of course. It has filtered down from the higher reaches of the academy. A friend of mine, a history don at Oxford, tells me that he has been specifically enjoined by the university to ignore faults of grammar, spelling, and punctuation when marking his students' essays (to fuss over such trivia would be to inhibit their originality, as well as to lose much time). More important, the last two professors of English literature at Oxford, John Carey and the avowed Marxist Terence Eagleton, have publicly maintained that in literature there is no better or worse, but only difference, and that therefore no intrinsic reason exists to study one text rather than another—Jane Austen rather than advertisements, Dickens rather than *Dallas*. Literary criticism tells us nothing about literature, but everything about the critic: his social position, his political ideology, his economic status, and so forth.

So Shakespeare's putative superiority is nothing but a fiction of a self-appointed social elite, who maintain their hegemony, in part, by the imposition of their literary tastes, which distinguish them from, and are not shared by, the masses. In a demotic age, no message could be more congenial, for it assures everyone who takes up the pen that his efforts are, *ipso facto*, as valuable—"valid" is the usual weasel word—as those of the most celebrated writers in history.

There are scribblers and poetasters everywhere. Not a few of my patients bring me their work, and I still hope one day to discover a talent among them (though the hope grows fainter with each disappointment). A short while ago, I discovered—after three years' acquaintance—that a nurse on one of the hospital wards in which I work wrote poetry. I asked whether she would one day show it me, and to my surprise she told me that she never went anywhere without the large notebook in which she wrote it, in case the muse should strike her unawares. Also, she said, it was her most treasured possession, and she feared to lose it.

She handed me the book with reverence for it, and with a brave attempt at insouciance she awaited my verdict. She had written about the death of children and other emotion-fraught events in the life of a nurse, but nonetheless her verse never once—not for a single line—rose above the level of greeting-card doggerel. I praised her sincerity, but I sensed that more was required of me ("Your poetry deserves to be published"). I asked, by way of diversion, whether she read much.

"Oh no," she replied. "I don't have time."

This, oddly enough, is the answer returned by all my patients who feel impelled to write. Estimable person though the nurse was, she fully partook of the egotistical notion that she might write well

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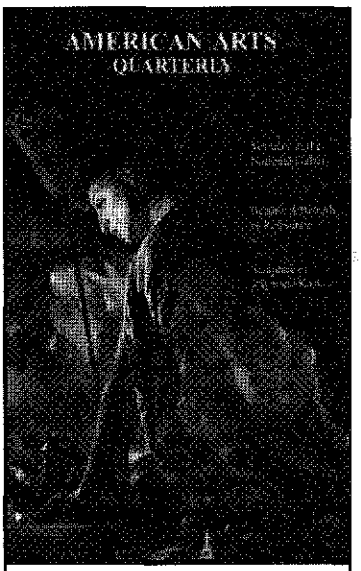
without any special knowledge of what had been written before her, and that literature rises phoenix-like from the ashes of personal experience alone. Romantic and egalitarian at the same time, the notion assumes that each person's untutored efforts to express himself will be crowned with success. There is no awareness of a literary tradition to which an author might make a contribution but rather a complete disconnection from the past and hence an entrapment in a solipsistic present. Professors Carey and Eagleton would be delighted at so thorough an assimilation of their lessons.

The nurse's poetry partook also of another general feature of amateur writing in the city: it served not to explore the deeper meanings of experience but to protect her from them. The death of an innocent child or the pointless suffering entailed in many illnesses (such as every nurse witnesses) are subject matter for subtle and painful reflection rather than greeting-card verse, in which declamatory sympathy or protest stands as a substitute for examination of the central questions of human existence. In a culture increasingly unwilling to distinguish between the good and the bad in its own cultural production, self-expression becomes tantamount to self-indulgence, and a barrier to understanding.

It need not be so. The prison in which I work employs a professional writer to assist those prisoners who want seriously to write. A patient man, he draws out understanding by Socratic means, gently questioning the prisoners' work. One prisoner who had long and angrily denied his participation in the serious crime of which he stood convicted wrote a novel under the writer's guidance. Like most first novels, it was strongly autobiographical, and at first he wrote fast and fluently. But as he approached the events that led to the crime, his writing slowed; he became tormented and experienced a complete block.

He had discovered that he was guilty, after all; and in finally acknowledging his guilt, he was obliged also to reconsider his hostile attitude to the world. His writing had removed the distorting lenses through which he had, for years, looked at it. The process was painful, but a precondition of living without the bad faith that had ruined his life and made him a menace to society.

Such honesty is rare. Freud said that the purpose of psychoanalysis was to transmute neurotic suffering into normal unhappiness. Most writing is undertaken to transmute personal dissatisfaction into generalized untruth, enabling the writer to distance himself, as if by an invisible wall, from the discomfort of his experience. And in the absence of literary standards, inculcated informally at home or formally in schools and universities, writing becomes but an expression of self-regard—an expression, in short, of the radical egotism that is so prominent a feature of modern English life. •



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Letters

Foster Care Horrors?

To the editor:
Condemning family preservation, as does Dennis Saffran, because some children die horrifying deaths ("Fatal Preservation," Summer 1997) is just as absurd as condemning foster care based on similar horror stories.

Between 1991 and 1995, when family preservation allegedly dominated child welfare in New York, total child-abuse deaths in the city fell from 60 to 29. In Illinois, where authorities did exactly what Saffran suggests and drove family preservation almost to extinction, the foster care population soared, forcing children to sleep in hideous shelter conditions where vulnerable younger children mixed with streetwise teens. Deaths in foster care hit a record high, and total child-abuse deaths went up for two years in a row. In New York, since the city vowed to curb family preservation, foster care placements have gone up 30 percent. At least a thousand children, as reported by the *New York Times*, have been forced to sleep in offices.

None of this made it into Saffran's article. Indeed, his lone statistic is the most misleading in all of child welfare: that about half of child-abuse deaths involve children previously known to the system. This statistic is meaningless. If, for example, a hypothetical community returns 10,000 children to their own homes and one dies, while another child, unknown to authorities, also dies, that means 50 percent of the child-abuse deaths in that community were known to the system. But it also means 9,999 children returned home safely.

A. A. Griffin
Chair, Advocacy Committee
National Family Preservation Network

Dennis Saffran responds:
Though one wouldn't know it from Mr. Griffin's letter, the key policy change my article advocates is merely that the "family" should not be preserved "when a parent has starved, tortured, sexually abused, severely injured, or abandoned a child." Many of Griffin's statistics are simply false. He says, for instance, that child-abuse fatalities in New York City declined from 60 in 1991 to 29 in 1995, but according to the city's Administration for Children's Services, there were 70 child abuse deaths in the city in 1995. And if he thinks that family preservation has been driven "almost to extinction" in Illinois, I refer him to the current controversy in Chicago over an abusive mother who has been receiving $61,000 a year in family preservation assistance from the state Department of Children and Family Services—including baby-sitting and housekeeping help even though she does not work and is not incapacitated. Lastly, as anyone who reads the paper should realize, the death rate of children in foster care is much lower than the death rate of children left with or returned to abusive parents. Children die in foster care only when gross negligence prevents the system from functioning as intended, while the risk of death is inherent in family preservation.

Homeless Advocates To Earth

To the editor:
Drawing on my experience, I have a very different perspective on what it means to be homeless in New York than does Heather Mac Donald ("Homeless Advocates in Outer Space," Autumn 1997).

As anyone knows who has attempted to "outreach" to a homeless person, or visited a soup kitchen, or simply spoken to a homeless person on the streets, most homeless people (unlike Heavy, one person Ms. Mac Donald mentions) are happy for the contact. Not that homeless individuals will always quickly move off the streets. If you have lost—or never had—family, belongings, and housing and have found a way to survive day-to-day, you are unlikely to risk the little stability you have by trusting a total stranger who invites you to a shelter, when shelters haven't had sterling reputations in the past.

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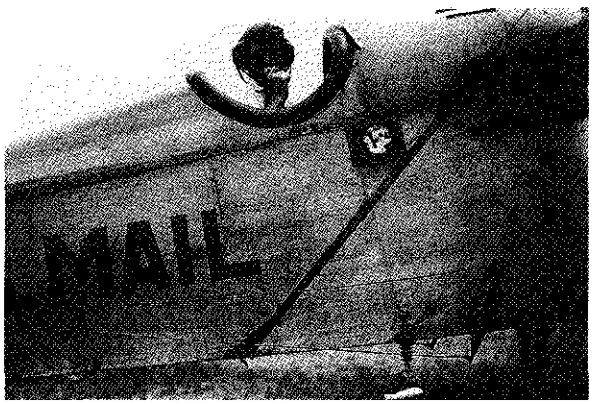
Homeless people, like everyone else, are likely to resist change unless they trust that the change will be safe. The isolation they face makes even the smallest step seem an impossible risk. Each person is unique, and services must therefore start where the client is, not where you or I might think the client ought to be. Outreach will fail if we don't proceed at the client's pace.

It's true that homeless services, including outreach, may seem time consuming, but time is vital to their success. Ms. Mac Donald says that homeless advocates use expensive service strategies to keep themselves in jobs and to lash out against capitalism. Nothing could be further from the truth. As homeless-service providers, our goal always remains to put ourselves out of business.

Nancy Wackstein
Executive Director of Lenox Hill Neighborhood House
Washington, D.C. 20004

To the editor:
In "Homeless Advocates in Outer Space," (Autumn 1997), Heather Mac Donald ignores the facts.

Across the country, cities and business groups are attempting to "sweep" homeless people off their streets by pressing for and enforcing laws that make it a crime to sleep, lie, or even sit in public places. But in cities pursuing such policies, there are more homeless people than even emergency resources to help them, based on the cities' own estimates. New York City estimates that there are up to 81,000 homeless, but only 27,000 placements for them. Punishing homeless people for living in public places when they have no alternative is cruel, irrational, and ultimately, futile.



FPG

In the Times Square area, the BID is trying a more constructive approach: it has hired social workers to conduct outreach, opened a seven-bed shelter, and established links to refer people to existing permanent-housing programs. A report on the project, cited by Ms. Mac Donald, notes that in the first year of outreach, few had used the shelter beds and only two had been placed in housing. But in a postscript—not mentioned by Ms. Mac Donald—the report says that two months later, the shelter was constantly full and four more people had been placed in housing. As of today, the BID reports that a total of 12 have been placed in housing and that the shelter has generally been full over the past four months.

Rather than discussing constructive solutions to homelessness, Ms. Mac Donald's article focuses on *ad hominem* attacks, incorrect information, and false accusations. This approach does not help to advance informed debate or efforts to respond to a human issue that is critically important for us all.

Maria Foscarinis
Executive Director
National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

Heather Mac Donald responds:
True to form, Ms. Foscarinis comes up with a real whopper: New York City, she claims, estimates that there are an astounding 81,000 homeless on its streets. Officials at the Department of Homeless Services, however, have never heard of that figure: indeed, they do not even estimate the number of homeless because of methodological difficulties.

But let's say Ms. Foscarinis is right. She finds it significant that, to date, the Times Square BID has placed 12 people in housing. That is fewer than five a year, at a cost of $172,916 a person—merely for placement, mind you, not for

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Letters

the housing itself. Anyway, it would cost over $14 billion to place all of New York's alleged 81,000 homeless, and it would take 16,200 years. Ms. Foscarinis undoubtedly finds that reasonable, but most taxpayers would not.

After years of telling the public that the homeless are just like you and me, the advocates now stress that they are incredibly different. Ms. Wackstein's gingerly approach to taming the homeless—place sandwhich on basket, retreat, watch if the homeless person moves to accept it, and repeat—surely strikes common sense as bizarre. If the homeless are so incapable of accepting needed help, why do advocates like Ms. Foscarinis think we should let them colonize public streets? A sane homelessness policy would begin by replacing the term "homeless" with addict, alcoholic, psychotic, hobo, or bum. The category "homeless" is a purely political construct, created to rebuke and plague an allegedly heartless nation.

Reconstructing Columbia

To the editor:
In his piece "Now They're Deconstructing the Columbia Campus" (Autumn 1997), David Garrard Lowe charges that Columbia has bowed to political correctness and anti-Western canon sentiment in its choice of Bernard Tschumi to build a new student center.

Even a modest familiarity with Columbia's undergraduate program, the Core Curriculum, belies that charge. At nearly 80 years old, Columbia has the oldest continuously operating Western civilization program in the country; clearly, the university has maintained its commitment to that program in all political climates.

It would be better not to read too much into a disagreement about aesthetics.

Emily Lloyd
Executive Vice President for Administration
Columbia University

David Garrard Lowe responds:
Emily Lloyd's response to my article is a curious bit of obfuscation. Whereas I was writing about the inappropriate design of Bernard Tschumi's new Alfred Lerner Hall, Ms. Lloyd talks about Columbia having "the oldest continuously operating Western civilization program in the country." I find it interesting that Ms. Lloyd says not a word in defense of Mr. Tschumi's grotesquely intrusive structure. That omission speaks louder than any admission.

Public School Lessons

To the editor:
I would like to thank Sol Stern for his many kind words for our school, P.S. 87, in his article, "My Public School Lesson" (Autumn 1997). I can also appreciate his criticisms. Certainly our school, like every school, needs to work harder to provide all students with the best possible education. And no sane person can take exception with his description of the New York City Board of Education and its ever-shrinking budgets, strangling bureaucracy, and frustrating layers of administration.

But where Mr. Stern and I part company is in his judgment that P.S. 87, which he names "the very best the school system can do," is just not good enough.

Mr. Stern bolsters his critique with snide comments on the methods we use at P.S. 87—methods that have withstood time and standardized tests. Those of us old enough to remember the bad old days of desks lined up in rows, facing a teacher who stood all day at the blackboard while we silently copied down her chalk marks, recognize how much easier that earlier method of teaching was. The fact that P.S. 87 students scored in the highest category in the standardized writing skills assessment test last year underscores the validity of our approach.

Can we do better? Of course. To balance a classroom filled with richness and creativity

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with a learning environment that adheres to basic standards and imparts important skills is quite a challenge. Over the last few years we have had staff retreats, task forces, and standards development teams to focus on the importance of these tasks.

If Mr. Stern finds himself frustrated with the city's bureaucracy and politics and the difficulties of dealing with the Board of Education, I can understand. If the fact that the children of minority families in this city are not getting a fair deal upsets him, I applaud his attention to their plight. But if he claims that his children (who, by the way, went on to attend a gifted middle-school program and the elite Stuyvesant High School—not a bad record for former P.S. 87 boys), or any children, got less than an excellent education here at P.S. 87, I question his vision as a reporter. And if he truly felt that in ten years this school was not meeting his children's needs, then I question his observation as a parent. That's an awfully slow learning curve.

Steven Plaut
Principal, P.S. 87

To the editor:
Thank you for your article on "progressive" education. I am a "common sense" fourth grade math teacher in another Teachers College-dominated elementary school. As scathing as your article was, I do not think it went far enough.

Many times my colleagues and I have paid a price for not adapting to the Teachers College philosophy. Now our school hires new teachers only from Teachers College. More traditional teachers are pressured by peers and administration to conform; the joke runs that some of us wait until the principal is out of the building to teach skills—so we won't get caught being "traditional." Meanwhile, in my class even the brightest students have difficulty composing a literate piece of writing—let alone doing math—with any proficiency. How can a program supposedly so wonderful be creating so many kids lagging behind?

Name withheld on request

Sol Stern responds:
Many thanks for the letter from the "common sense" teacher. To Mr. Plaut, o.k., I'll admit it, I am not an educator. But then, only an educator would believe that in the "bad old days," teachers "stood all day at the blackboard" and students were robots who "silently copied down her chalk marks," but now, liberated by the gospel as preached at Teachers College and other progressive ed schools, public school teachers are doing much better and turning out knowledgeable adults. Who else but an educator would delude himself into thinking that his school's students write at a high level of competency because they scored well on tests graded by their own teachers—the same progressive teachers trained to regard sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation as relics of those "bad old days"?

Alas, I am merely a parent who entrusted my children to Mr. Plaut and his fellow professional educators, and a taxpayer who pays their salaries. As such, I expected a little more in the way of accountability than Mr. Plaut's assurances that his teachers "have had staff retreats, task forces, and standards development teams." What I observed—as a parent—is that P.S. 87 doesn't even have a curriculum and, therefore, cannot enforce the "basic standards" Mr. Plaut says he favors. He is a decent, hard-working administrator, caught in an excellence-squelching system. If he and his colleagues were willing to work with parents to change that system, and if, during the past 10 years, there was even the semblance of an open debate at P.S. 87 about the merits of progressive education, I would be less disillusioned with the public schools in general, and P.S. 87 in particular. And then Mr. Plaut wouldn't have to complain about my "slow learning curve."

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Leo Trachtenberg wrote and directed documentary films for business and government. Since 1982 he has written for the publications department of the New York Yankees, and he has authored a history of the 1927 Yankees, *The Wonder Team*.

Correction: The photo of St. Paul's Chapel in the Autumn 1997 issue was from the archives of the Museum of the City of New York.

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Trick or Treat?

Brian C. Anderson

Our plan did not originally include moving to the Bronx. When my wife and I decided to come to New York, we had many reasons to do so: a new job, the prospect of living closer to our families, and of course Manhattan, the greatest place on Earth. But the Bronx? When people mentioned it, I pictured burned-out buildings and crack-addicted neighbors. What sane person would move there willingly?

But my friend David insisted that I had the Bronx all wrong. Moreover, the apartment building in which he lived had a vacancy. The rent was great, the apartment stood five minutes from a commuter train stop, and best of all, we would have friends living there. With two weeks to find a place to live, we took the easy route and trusted David.

As we descended from the cab our first evening in the Bronx, three police cars drove by slowly, peremptorily shining lights into the dark park in front of our new building. "Oh, there's a police precinct a block away," David reassured us, although later it occurred to me this was not sufficient explanation for what the police were doing. The next morning, though, we saw our new neighborhood in the bright light of a northeast October day, and it was almost idyllic. Old folks sat on park benches gossiping while dogs frolicked in the park—except, on closer inspection, the dogs were not frolicking so much as straining violently on their leashes. Almost all the dogs were pit bulls, with the occasional Cerberus-like rottweiler adding genetic variation. A lone poodle looked—quite rationally, I thought—terrified.

Our second night—Halloween—led me to suspect that we were unwitting pawns in David's master plan to gentrify the Bronx. First came the trick-or-treaters, some of whom were in their early twenties and spoke with deep voices. At about 9 PM we stopped answering the door. Then, a little later, our whole building began throbbing, as if we were now living inside a disco. Could somebody actually be playing music this loud? Why weren't the old people we saw earlier, presumably not all of them stone deaf, calling the cops?

My wife had already abandoned hope: "We've made a terrible, terrible mistake," she said icily. Only after a call and response kicked in between a bellowing emcee and what sounded like at least 2,000 people did I realize that this cacophony couldn't possibly be coming from inside our building. Although we were prepared to think the worst—that living in the Bronx meant simply accepting ear-splitting bacchanalia late into the night—the truth was more complicated. The next morning, bleary-eyed, I discovered the source of the noise: a local school held a dance party every Halloween to keep kids from shooting and stabbing one another—or unlucky passers-by—on a night that, in the Bronx, one truly has reason to be afraid. Thus, at least on certain troubled Bronx evenings, one trades sleep for peace of mind, not a choice I'm certain my wife and I want to confront for long.

Meanwhile, I arranged to have a cable-TV salesman come to the apartment, a preliminary stage to having the cable man himself arrive. I had tried for two weeks to have cable installed before we moved in, but the company refused to return my calls. As I discovered from the world-weary salesman, Bronx residents had the habit, once addicted to cable but unable to pay, of switching accounts to other members of the household, pretending themselves to move and hocking the cable box on the street. Hence the cable company's suspicion and the need for a salesman's visit.

Since then, I've gotten a little more used to the Bronx. Nothing works very well; 204th Street oddly has seven small, poorly stocked newsstands within three blocks; we see the occasional crack addict. My wife and I stick to the same three streets, as if our neighborhood had shrunk dramatically. I'm not sure how long we'll stay before moving farther from, or closer to, Manhattan. But most of the people in my neighborhood seem hardworking, there's a great bar around the corner, and the nearby Botanical Garden stands resplendent, a reminder of the Bronx's faded glory. •

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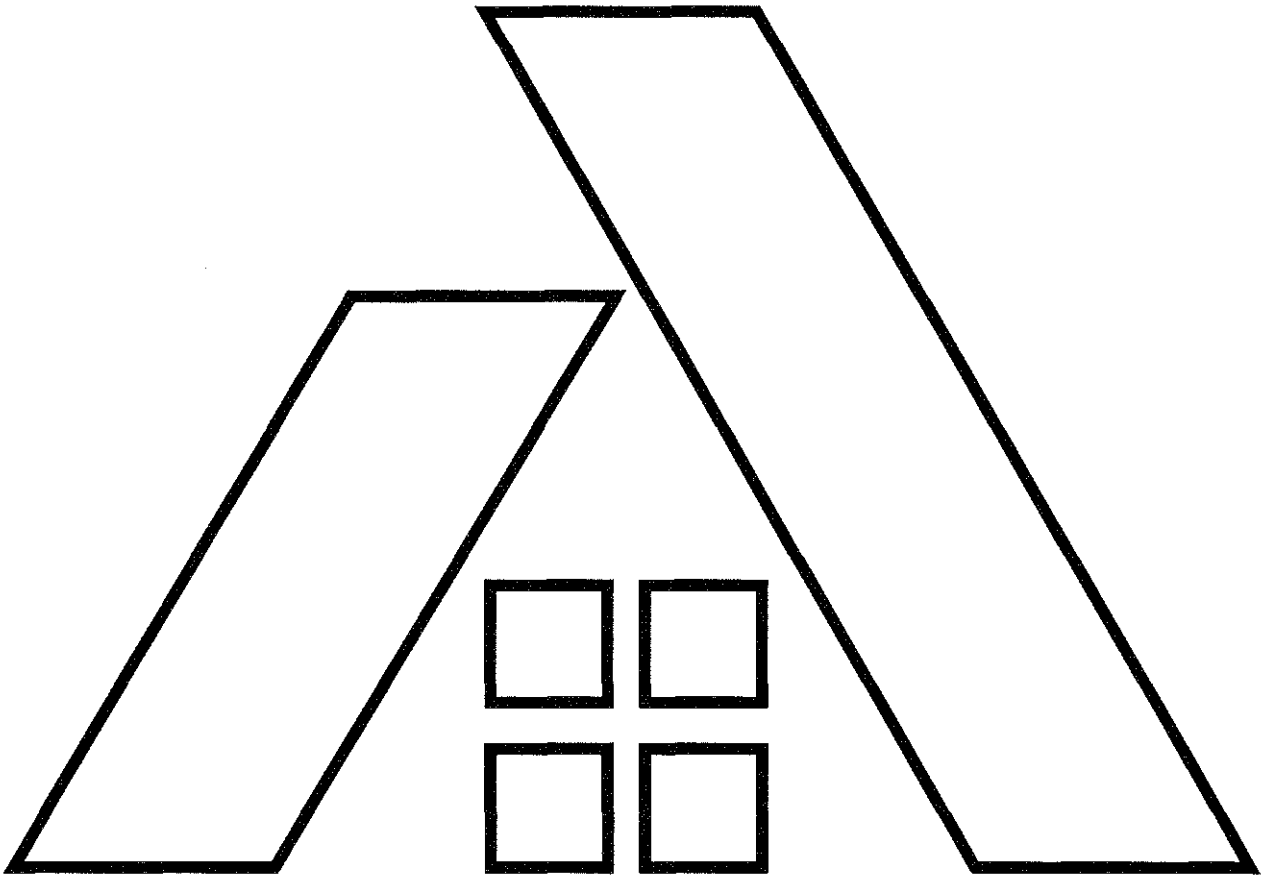

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